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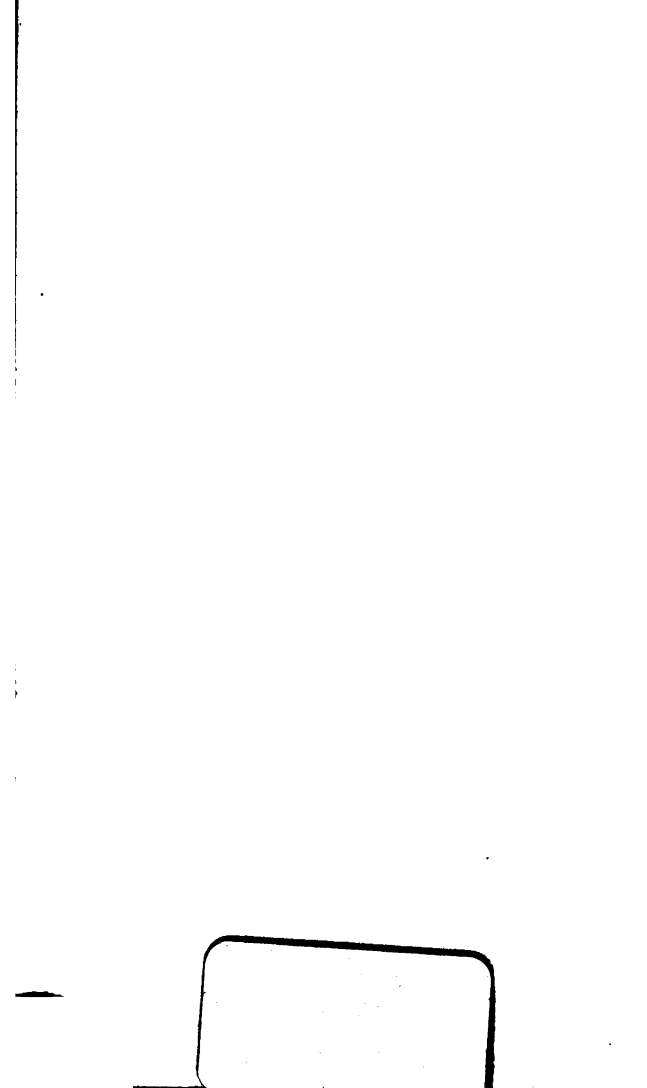
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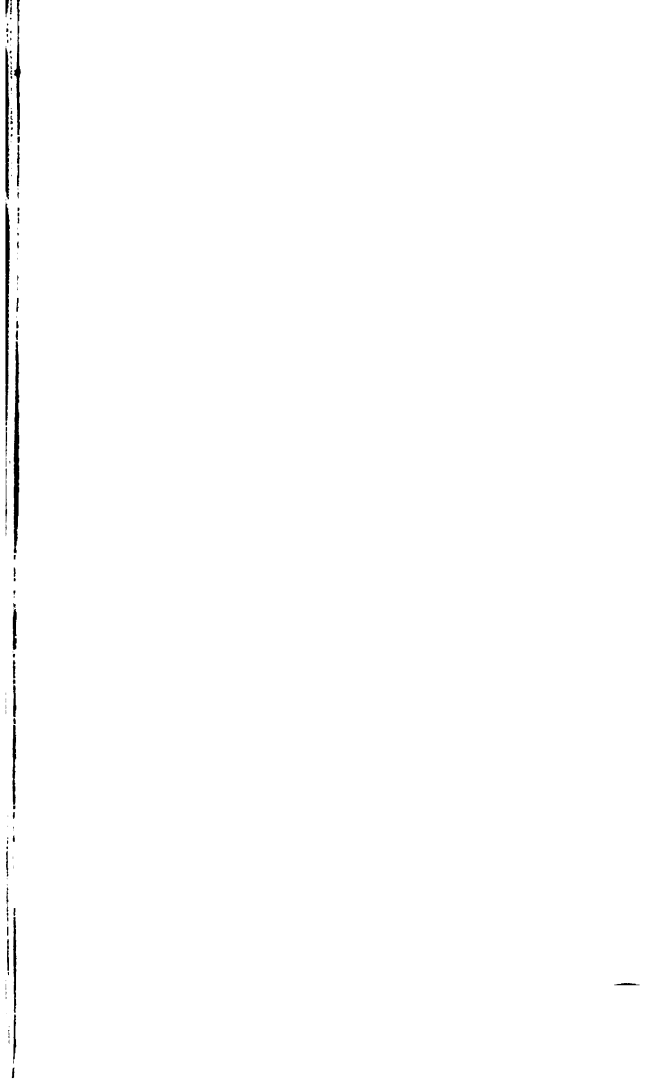
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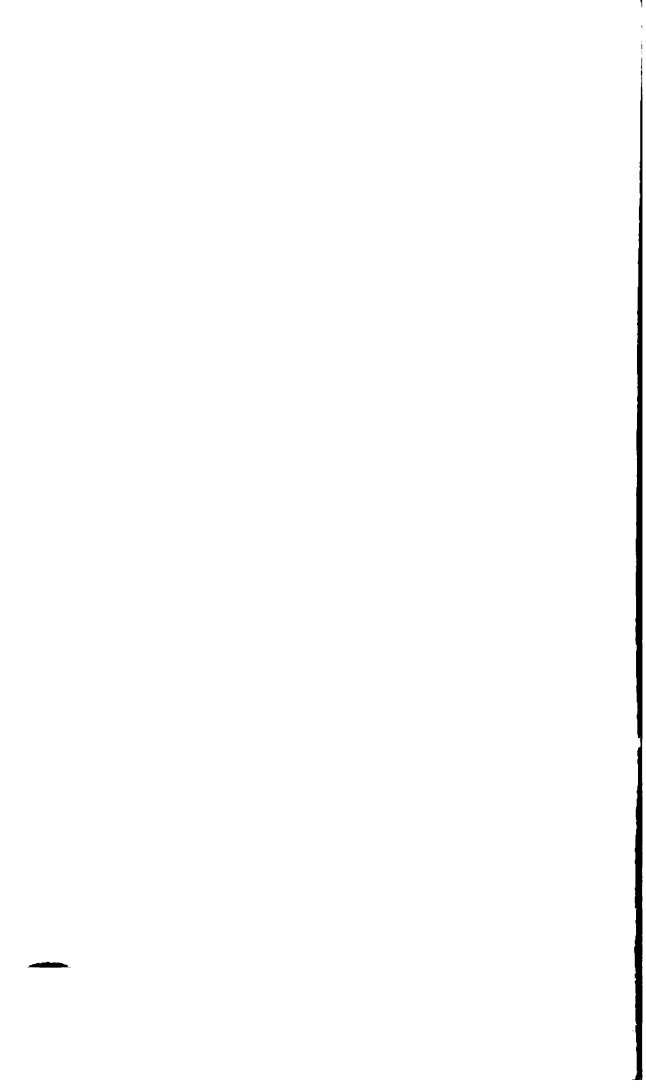
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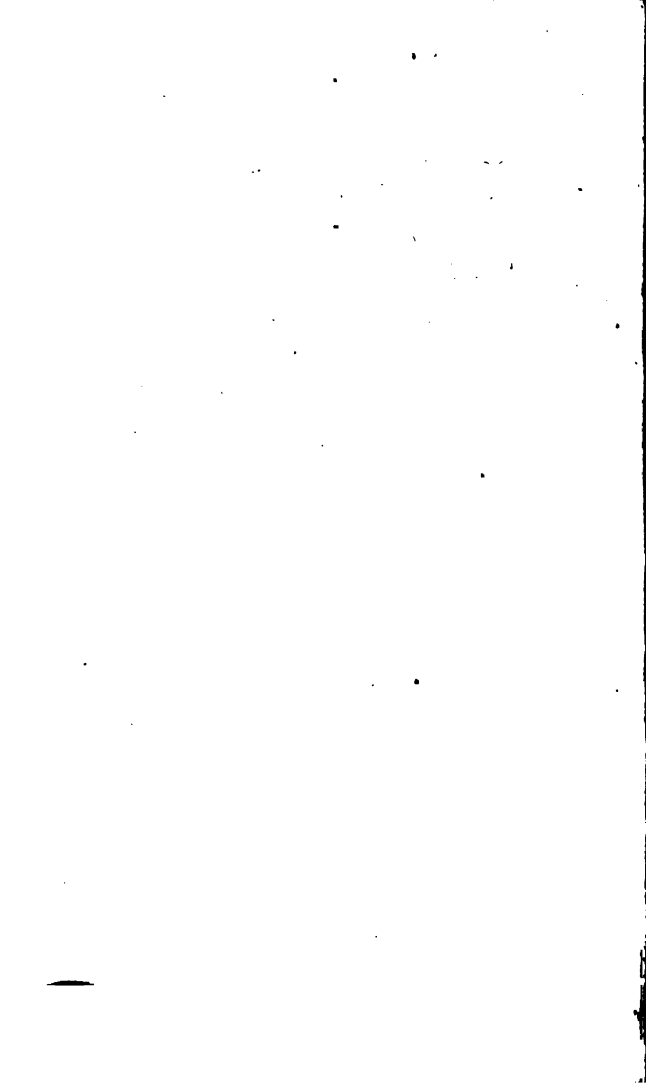
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CELEBRATED SALOONS,

BY MADAME GAY;

AND

PARISIAN LETTERS,

BY MADAME GIRARDIN.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH,

BY L. WILLARD.

BOSTON:

WM. CROSBY AND H. P. NICHOLS,

111, WASHINGTON STREET.

1851.

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BOSTON:

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P R E F A C E.

MADAME GAY, the writer of "Celebrated Saloons," has herself held a saloon of no little celebrity; and her daughter, Madame Girardin, moves in the highest circles of fashion. Madame Gay is still living; that is, we have had no tidings to the contrary. She seems most known as a writer upon education; but I have seen stories and a play, with her name attached. She incidentally gives us some sketches of her early life in her "Celebrated Saloons." We find she moved in a brilliant circle, and adorned that circle. She evinces much filial love, and warm affections for her friends: as to her talents, they speak for themselves. Both she and her daughter, Madame Girardin, see the ludicrous side of things strongly: but Madame Gay is often serious; Madame Girardin, seldom. They are both truly French, and as French we must view them. They see the errors and absurdities of society, but are pretty well contented to enjoy it and laugh at it.

It is interesting to see the society of different nations; but we cannot measure them by our standard, especially the French. Their goodness is impulsive; their vices they do not take the trouble to conceal. Perhaps our vices may be called their errors. Surely, I should be

far from extenuating vice; but we must make allowances for those nations who have blind guides, who are taught to swerve from truth from infancy, and whom the customs of society and the examples around them lead farther astray.

I have translated the present work, considering it a picture of French society, but am far from endorsing the sentiments advanced, especially by Madame Girardin, who sets forth no higher motive for action than the desire of pleasing.

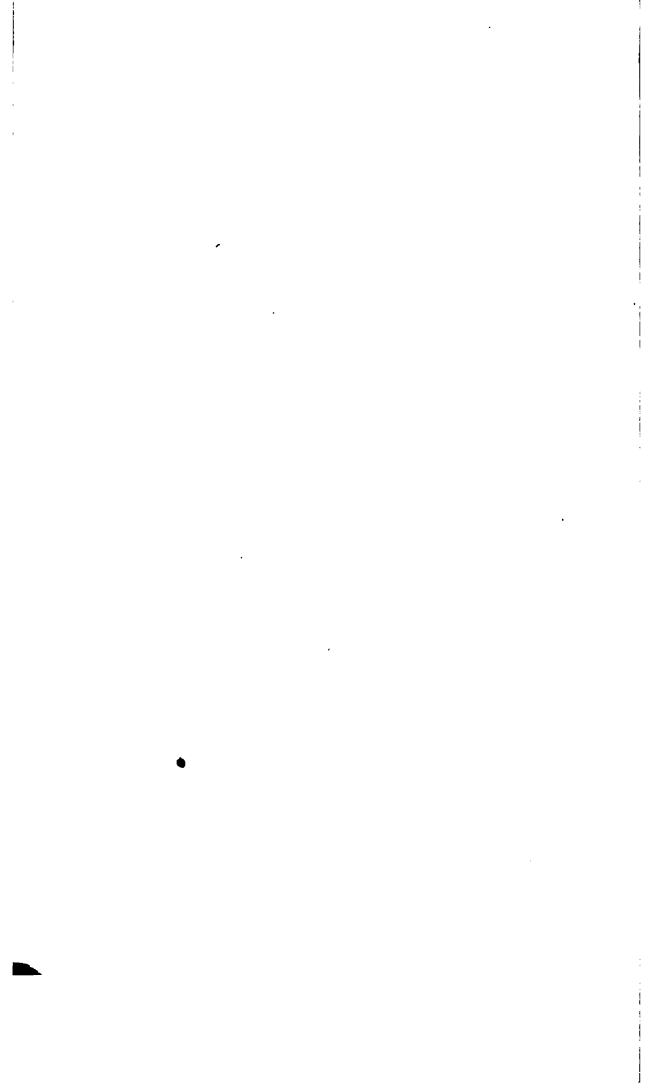
I have understood that her husband was editor of the journal, *La Presse*; and his wife, Emile de Girardin, for several years contributed to that journal, with the assumed name and title of Vicomte Charles de Launay. Her pieces there were addressed to the Parisian public, under the form of Letters, with the title *Courrier de Paris*, and were afterwards published by themselves with her true name.

The French editor says in his Introduction: "They have served as a model for innumerable imitations, and deserve, even from their success, to remain as a faithful souvenir of the genius of French society, — their manners, customs, habits, absurdities, pretensions, whims." He adds: "What popularity at this epoch would these Letters obtain in a reprint! This belief has determined us to publish them under the title of *Lettres Parisiennes*; and we think this correspondence, by turns so light and so deep, always true, always brilliant, with her other works, evince such varied talent, and power of imagination, that we feel it a duty to the public to preserve them in a durable form."

TRANSLATOR.

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CELEBRATED SALOONS,

BY MADAME GAY.



CELEBRATED SALOONS,

BY MADAME GAY.



THE SALOON

OF

MADAME DE STAEL.

PART I.

IN France the empire of the saloon has passed away with that of the women; and it would be difficult to give to what at this day is called Young France an idea of the influence that certain saloons formerly exercised over affairs of state and the choice of ministers.

To hold a saloon was no easy thing; many great lords, rich men, and parvenus, every evening assembled numerous guests in their gilded halls, and entertained them by balls and concerts; but this was not holding the *saloon*; the requisite conditions for attaining this redoubtable honor were seldom united in one person.

There must first be the indescribable charm of wit, spirit, and dignity united. To these intrinsic powers, some adventitious circumstances must unite, to render them available: the lady, without being old, must have passed that age in which one is only celebrated for her lovely person or exquisite dress, and reached that period of life when talents and genius command homage, and distinguish those admitted to their worship; then she obtains more entire influence over the men through their ambition and vanity than the attractions of youth could ever gain from their hearts.

Rank and fortune were available, but not indispensable for the queens of the saloon: witness Madame du Deffant, who was almost poor, and Madame Geoffrin, who was the wife of a manufacturer. In the meantime each was mistress of a saloon, from whence issued edicts, and where members of the Academy were virtually elected; but the questions which were then agitated were far from possessing the importance of those which have since caused the renown of Madame de Stael.

The second law of the saloon respected the master of the house, who must be polite, but not in the way; he must be a nullity, or absent.

One sufficiently agreeable might sometimes be tolerated, but that was an exception ; and in no case should he take precedence of her who was the presiding genius. It behooved the mistress of the saloon to be critical in her choice of guests ; for, if they were to be indiscriminately admitted to her reünions, the mass would be so heterogeneous as to lose all consideration and influence.

She should have a decided taste for superiority of all sorts, and soar above those narrow feelings of envy or jealousy which would prevent her from receiving the leader of fashion or the successful author. She must place her enemies at their ease, — talents where they can be available, and bores at the door : all this demands address and resolution.

She must impose upon herself the seclusion of a god in his temple ; await every evening the faithful, and not expose them to see the altars deserted when they come to offer their homage.

At this time, when we are called upon every evening to applaud a new piece, to stifle at routs, to attend balls where our carriages must remain three hours in file before attaining the scene of action, one can scarcely comprehend the voluntary bonds a lady formerly imposed

upon herself of always passing her evenings at home, except some ceremony in court or family gave dispensation. This, say you, must have been insupportable slavery. Ah ! be it so ; this slavery which consisted in daily receiving at your house people of the most distinguished genius, and engaging in conversations replete with eloquence and wit, was perhaps, after all, less hard to endure than the so-called pleasures of the world. Some idea may be formed of the advantages resulting from this voluntary imprisonment, in seeing it submitted to by a woman of the most active spirit of the age which she adorned ; whose entrance at a meeting of the *Chambre*, or at a public spectacle, always created a great sensation, — in fine, by Madame de Stael.

Her presence would always have been welcomed in any saloon she honored ; the sympathy and admiration her spirit required would never have been withheld : but she knew that her influence would be most surely felt at home ; even if she imparted all her genius in other reunions, at home she would be the possessor of all the genius and talent there assembled ; of the facts and histories there related, the *bons mots* there uttered, she was almost the proprietor ; she held

the power of life and death over all conversations ; and, in France, the power of leading conversation where one wills is very nearly allied to the power of executing what one wills.

The saloon of Madame de Stael, whose power caused the greatest sovereign of our modern history to tremble, may be divided into three epochs : that of the revolution ; that of the consulate ; that of the restoration.

The first saloon was, without contradiction, the most influential. It was there that MM. Barnave, Talleyrand, Chénier, Benjamin Constant, and many others known to fame, discussed the decrees in embryo, and decided upon important nominations.

Barras, the only one of the members of the Directory admitted to the house of Madame de Stael, was unceasingly solicited by her in favor of the victims of the revolution ; and it may be affirmed that each of his visits cost the gallant director some good action.

It was through the influence of Madame de Stael that Talleyrand was recalled. It was again Madame de Stael, who, after the return of Talleyrand, induced Barras, by her powerful recommendations, to elect him for the department of foreign affairs ; “ for,” said she, “ M. de Tal-

leyrand requires aid in attaining power; but, once attained, he can dispense with our assistance."

Stable in power when all was in chaos, he was called the *toujours ministre*. To Madame de Stael's saloon, France owed the political existence of this able minister.

Unhappily, this miraculous transformation of a gentleman priest, who was an emigrant into a republican minister, did not lead to the reconciliation of parties, as Madame de Stael had hoped. The parties that divided the councils remained no less inimical.

Madame de Stael received as her guests many of the men who conspired on the 18th of Fructidore; she was also accused of taking a part in the conspiracy. She defended herself from this accusation, and surely we ought to believe her: *her saloon alone was culpable*.

All the devotion inspired by her generous heart for the wretched persons proscribed that fatal day is very well known; but this calmed not the resentment that caused M. Devaines, in speaking of Madame de Stael, to say, "This is an admirable woman, who drowns all her friends that she may have the pleasure of fishing them up."

PART II.

The second reign of the saloon of Madame de Stael was not so disastrous; it killed only the tribumat, and that was but a few months in advance; for the government that the first Consul meditated comported not with parliamentary opposition, which had already made such wild work. In speaking of the orators of the tribumat, Bonaparte said, "I have no time to reply to these obstinate, prating fools; they do nothing, and undo every thing. They shall be made to hold their peace."

It is true that many members of the tribumat, lost children of the republic, imbued with ideas of liberty, and always proceeding towards this seducing political mirage, loudly combated his preparatory decrees, which seemed to them so many little paths leading to absolute power.

It was then that the saloon of Madame de Stael resounded with just complaints from the party which wished to profit from the revolution; those who had achieved it had almost totally fallen; but the institutions purchased by so much suffering, such horrible condemnations,

ought to be defended with courage ; they had cost so dear ! The excuse for madness in the pursuit of liberty was the wise freedom that would ensue : this was the sentiment that Garat, Andrieux, Daunou, Benjamin Constant, aided by the genius and enthusiasm of Madame de Stael, sought to diffuse in eloquent appeals at the sittings of the tribunat.

These declamations in favor of liberty were extemporized, the evening before delivered, in conversations with Madame de Stael. The most adroit of these orators were such as availed themselves the most freely of Madame de Stael's ideas and language ; the larger number issued from her house with a discourse all completed for the next day ; and, what was more, with a resolution to pronounce it ; an act of courage which was not less her work. As their intention was at the bottom very good, and the word *liberty*, although much discredited by the abuse it had endured, still met with a response in the hearts of the people, there reigned no mystery in these reünions. Besides, the renown of Madame de Stael rendered all mystery impossible ; her opinions found many colporteurs. Thus the first Consul was instructed, at his rising, of all that had transpired the night before

at Madame de Stael's, and of the attacks he should have to repel that morning.

When power is established, a man can treat with disdain the declamations, even of an intelligent minority ; but not so when his project is unripe : it is the difference between the sapling that one must shelter, and the full-grown plant that can brave the storm. The projects of an ambitious man are his life ; he is indifferent to what he already possesses, but is striving for something difficult of attainment.

Madame de Stael herself acknowledged to us what her saloon was through her, and by her authority, in these words : " One of the tribunes, a friend of liberty, whom nature had endowed with a most remarkable genius, I mean Benjamin Constant, consulted me upon a discourse he was intending to write, to designate the dawn of tyranny. I encouraged him with all the strength of my conscience ; nevertheless, as he was known for one of my intimate friends, I could not prevent myself from fearing what might accrue from it. I was vulnerable through my taste for society. The evening before Benjamin Constant was to pronounce his discourse, there met at my house, Lucien Bonaparte, MM. ***, ***, ***, ***, and many others,

whose conversation, differing in degree of intellectual power, and various in character, united in manly strength and grace of expression. Each one, Lucien excepted, had been proscribed, and, wearied out with the discord, ruin, and confusion of the past chaotic state of the nation, prepared himself to serve the new government, only exacting to be well recompensed for his devotion.

“Benjamin Constant drew near to me, and said in a low tone, ‘Witness your saloon filled with people who please you; if I speak, to-morrow it will be deserted.’ ‘Truth must be your guide — follow your conviction,’ I replied to him.

“The exaltation of my mind inspired this reply; but, I acknowledge it, if I had foreseen what I should have suffered from the date of that day, I should not have had strength to refuse the offer made me by Benjamin Constant to renounce giving in his evidence, that he might not compromise me.”

The effect produced by this discourse, how it was imitated and supported by republican orators, and the decree that followed, is very well known. The members of the tribunat, broken up by this decree, met in the saloon of Madame de Stael, according to custom, happy to be able

to avenge themselves by witticisms, ridicule, and satire, for the arbitrary decree which interdicted the eloquence of the tribune.

In the meantime, this opposition, which exhaled itself in epigrams, could annoy and provoke, but not overthrow, the power which was exalting itself.

In the excitement of conversation, many ideas, some confused, some clear, some superficial, some profound, are thrown out; but what avail these fragments, however profound or brilliant, against deep schemes of ambition, meditated in silence, and pursued with constancy?

Besides, at this epoch, the soirées of Madame de Stael were not only attended by the chiefs of the opposition, but amongst her guests were many attached to the government. The brothers of the first Consul, the ministers, the editors of journals, who were completely under subjection to the government, came there to seek for news; as Talma and Gerard for inspiration.

Madame de Stael's abode was an asylum for returned emigrants; they were there treated with that exquisite politeness, that regard for birth and honorable poverty, which distinguished good company under the ancient régime. The

Duke Matthieu could there express the religious sentiments with which his pure and kind soul was imbued, without fear of irony from some old atheist or young intellectual combatant. The Duke de Laval could there preserve his refined feelings, and the delicacy and grace of his noble and simple manners, without molestation. The Count Louis de Narbonne, near Madame de Stael, could retain in safety the traditions of the court, and the courtly mien, at the same time graceful and noble, which have since gained him so much favor with the emperor.

The Chevalier de Boufflers delighted us all by his racy anecdotes, his cheerful philosophy, his words of deep meaning in a light tone, his railery so piquant, and so well seconded by the brilliant repartees of M. de Chauvelin.

The Count de Sabran already gave proof of that distinguished genius and generous heart which was soon to devote itself to Madame de Stael, and cheer her exile.

These interesting vestiges of the old régime mingled with a good grace with the superior or celebrated spirits born of the revolution, such as Ducis, Chénier, Legouvé, Benjamin Constant, &c. The difference in political opinions yielded to the need of communication, of giving and re-

ceiving pleasure: for the enlightened admiration of the men of the old régime was necessary for the advocates of the new; and the supporters of a tempered aristocracy, the old ministers of good taste, loved to see the influence their opinions still had upon the young democratic talents. Each of the parties, neutralized by the overwhelming tyranny that threatened to annihilate both, enjoyed themselves together, without love, without fear, like poor toothless dogs and cats divested of claws.

This sport was displeasing to the first Consul. In vain M. Regnault de Saint Jean d'Angely, the constant friend and defender of Madame de Stael to Napoleon, affirmed that the saloon of this celebrated woman could not endanger a power so well established as his. He replied, —

“This is not a saloon: it is a club.”

In vain M. Regnault asseverated that Madame de Stael felt too much enthusiasm for glory to think of conspiring against the vanquisher of Italy; truth, flattery, all were baffled by the antipathy of the hero for the woman of genius; it was the hatred of action against observation, of great designs for little obstacles, of passion for irony.

She must abdicate. A decree of exile con-

demned Madame de Stael to lay down the sceptre over Parisian conversation. Her brilliant life concentrated itself into an intimacy more worthy of desire than the pleasures of the world. Under the eyes of a father whom she adored ; surrounded by friends that her exile drew the closer, although it is too apt ordinarily to sever ties ; occupied with the education of her daughter, whose beauty, talent, and virtues would gratify all the ambition of a mother ; celebrated for the creations of genius that have placed her in the highest ranks of our literature ; object of the homage of all the sovereigns and all the literati throughout Europe, — she cannot share our pity for her destiny ; for we have none to bestow.

PART III.

The third epoch which reöpened Madame de Stael's saloon in Paris was that of our reverses. The sight of the Cossacks, who then ruled our streets, was insupportable to me ; and I made myself a close prisoner in my house, where letters from my friends kept me informed of all

that passed of interest in the distinguished saloons.

A man of keen and profound discernment, who has been since known to the public by his charming works, wrote to me, after returning from a soirée at Madame de Stael's, a description of the evening.

This letter paints better than I could, this last brilliant saloon, which was soon, alas ! to be closed for ever.

LETTER TO MADAME GAY.

Paris, 8th of March, 1814, 2 o'clock
in the morning.

I have returned from my soirée, and I cannot sleep without recounting to you all that has amused me. *Amused* is not the word ; for Madame de Stael's saloon is more than a place where one meets for pleasure : it is a mirror in which we see reflected the image of the times. What we see and hear there is more instructive than many books, and gayer than many comedies. You ask me why I read little ? To what purport could he read who passes his life at the fountain whence issue all the ideas of his time ; where he sees them in embryo, and foresees their effect when they shall be put in circulation ? I

would not labor so idly as to search in books for the knowledge which is revealed to me under the most seducing forms : there is a life and a spirit that ray forth, — a torrent of fire, — the lightning of genius, in the revelations of Madame de Stael. For what shall we live, if we ever lose her ?

What you feel as the greatest charm, when in the society of this woman, is the perfect reliance you place in her. You feel immediately in possession of all your faculties, and then she will lend you a portion of her own ; for her spirit is not avaricious : it freely dispenses the treasures of her soul ; and what I prize above all treasures is the soul of genius.

At the close of evening, when her genius has lavished its eloquence upon the crowd, and its public mission is accomplished, it is sweet to be allowed to come near her, and feel all the worth of the title of friend. Then, reëntering herself, yielding to the confidential intercourse of which the soul of genius always feels the need, — then, alone with one or two friends, we discover with admiration all that God has put into her heart. What naïveté in her confessions ! what sublime simplicity ! How much light she throws upon the human soul, upon the world ! What

discoveries she imparts to you from history, what revealings of yourself, what new light upon subjects that you thought you understood as well as she could! I thank the Creator for being, like her, of the human race!

Just now, she complained to me of the indifference of certain persons.

"One cannot," replied I, "be an object of interest to every one."

"But," she said, with an expression of countenance caught from heaven, "why is it that each one of these persons cannot love me as I do all of them?"

This simple testimony of a heart burning with charity divine, this noble burst of inevitable and sublime grief, paints her better than whole volumes of analysis or narration. I admire her, as all the world admire her; few love her as I love her; in fine, I find her beautiful! She reconciles me to the life in Paris. Then she is unhappy elsewhere, and she must meet here with something analogous to her nature. I cannot define this attraction to Paris; but she sees more clearly and further than I do.

You know that this evening the Duke of Wellington was to attend the soirée at her house for the first time, and arrived there early; she had

not come in. Some of the usual guests were in waiting. The most marked were the Abbé de Pradt, Benjamin Constant, M. de Lafayette. They conversed; I remained in a corner, seeming to listen to them. I believe they had not interpreted my silence aright.

At length, Madame de Stael entered. "I am late," she said to us; "but it is not my fault. I was invited to dine at ***; I felt obliged to attend. On one side of me was placed Fouché, on the other de M***: that was being between the poniard and poison."

This was a precise definition, and we all exclaimed upon the originality, and unhappily upon the justice, of this comparison. But, for my part, it confirmed me in my determination to escape from a country which permitted, which necessitated treason, — at least in words. I could not censure Madame de Stael for yielding to the general tone of the society in which we lived; but, I said to myself, if spirits which command the crowd partake the common feebleness, how can the feeble stand!

A crowd had now arrived. All were in expectation of the hero of the evening. We had yet only seen him in presentation, and were impatient to hear him converse.

Madame Récamier was announced ; she alone could beguile the mistress of the house of her weariness in waiting. Madame de Stael has discovered beneath her charms, treasures of which the world had not dreamed. These ladies remained conversing in a low tone until the arrival of the Duke of Wellington.

He entered ! The nobleness of his figure, the simple modesty of his manners, produced upon us the most agreeable effect. His pride, and sure he must possess it, wore the grace of timidity. Madame de Stael, overcome by surprise at his attitude and language, so little French, exclaimed, "He bears his glory as if it was of no weight ;" then, as if from a return of patriotism, she inclined toward me and said, "We must acknowledge, however, that nature never made a man at so little cost."

You will believe, after this début, that we had had much pleasure during the remainder of the soirée. Judge, then : the Duke of Wellington had not proceeded the length of the saloon, when the Abbé Pradt waylaid him, and obliged him to hearken for at least three quarters of an hour to his harangue upon military tactics. Imagine the indignation of Madame de Stael, and the weariness of the whole company ! M. Schlegel

said he believed himself listening to the rhetorician who delivered a discourse upon the art of war to Hannibal. The beauty of the discourse by no means recompensed us for the weariness of listening three quarters of an hour to what we all knew, uttered in good French, when we were expecting to hearken to new things spoken with foreign accent. Amongst the few words that the English general was able to get in, there was one remark which struck me. Whilst the Abbé stopped to take breath, or his handkerchief, the warrior had time to say that the most appalling moment to a man who commands an army is that when he has gained a battle, because he has to pass the night upon the battlefield, to feel assured the next day of the retreat of the enemy ; or the vanquisher could not know that he might not be vanquished.

Every thing has its price in this world ; and, if the men of all conditions would each reveal his secret, we should see that the most brilliant triumphs cost at least as much as they were worth. However that may be, I perceived as much justice as nice tact in the remark of the Duke of Wellington. He seemed to be seeking our pardon for the curiosity he had inspired in us.

Many people withdrew, discouraged from the *mal-à-propos* oratory of the Abbé de Pradt ; the hero himself thought to escape, when Madame de Stael succeeded in freeing him from the ambuscade. She detained him near the door ; a serious conversation ensued upon the English constitution. Madame de Stael could not reconcile political liberty with the servile forms remaining among a people so proud of their liberty as the English.

“Aristocratical language and usages give offence to no one in a country really free,” said the Duke. “We retain these unimportant forms as homage to the past ; and we preserve our ceremonies as we retain a monument, even when it has no more its primitive destination.”

“Is it true,” said Madame de Stael, “that your Lord Chancellor addresses the king kneeling during the sitting of the parliament?”

“It is true.”

“How does he do it?”

“He speaks to him kneeling, as I inform you.”

“But in what manner?” “You will it,” replied the Duke ; and he threw himself at the feet of our Corinna. “I command all my subjects to witness !” cried Madame de Stael. And

the whole assembly applauded with one accord. I answer not for this unanimity of applause, when these same spectators were at the foot of the stairs.

The guests departed; I still remained two hours with Madame de Stael and M. Schlegel, whose anger against the rhetorical Abbé knew no bounds.

During these two hours, the conversation of Madame de Stael has delighted me, and proved how much reason I have to be attached to a person who is at the same time so much in the world and out of it; so near and so remote.

She said to us this evening, in the enthusiasm of her spirit, "What a happiness, if one could be queen for twenty-four hours! How many fine things we would say!" It was expressions of this nature which caused my uncle, the Count de Sabran, to say, —

"She wished that the world was a saloon, and she herself the lustre!" It is possible that this piquant pleasantry may apply to certain moments of her life. Time would fail me to relate to you in detail the conversation of this evening. There is more than one subject for a book in a conversation of two hours with Madame de Stael. But I must now sleep; in fine, that I may be

able to visit you to-morrow, and tell you all that has occurred, which I must now leave you to divine.

A. DE CUSTINE.

This letter appears to us a faithful representation of the saloon and conversation of this eloquent woman. "If I was queen," said Madame Tessé, "I should order Madame de Stael to talk to me always."



THE SALOON

OF

MADemoisELLE CONTAT.

PART I.

“The saloon of an actress!” exclaim my readers; “you deceive us: it is the boudoir you would say.”

No; an actress of great talent formerly could be queen of a saloon: all that was required to attain this end was a taste for good society.

A taste for good society, how much that comprises in an actress! When we think of all the obstacles that the prejudices and customs of society oppose to the noble ambition of uniting the independence of the artist with an association in circles of the highest rank, we must award as much esteem as admiration to the noble being who has vanquished them. An

actress who associates with those who are superior to her in rank, education, tone, is reminded too frequently of her own deficiencies, and must be above the narrow pride which wishes to exult in her superiority to all around her.

The precedents Mademoiselle Lecouvreur and Mademoiselle Quinault, in whose saloons were assembled the best company of their time, sufficed to encourage Mademoiselle Contat in holding one of her own; for, to do justice to the ancient régime, it was much more gracious than the present system to actors, and avenged their exclusion from the privileges and domesticities of private life by a welcome reception in public assemblies.

As soon as the law levelled all ranks, then society interfered to separate them; again, if philosophy dealt a blow at the prejudices, wise or absurd, of fashion, immediately society hastened to restore and show them up again to the world, where they were the more welcomed from the fear that they had departed this life.

When privileges, customs, and usages completely separate one class from another, differing ranks make mutual concessions in order to approach; but at this day, when little men are continually afraid of being trampled upon, it

behooves them to stand erect, as a statue in a niche. From hence it accrues that the actors live in our midst, but are a people apart; as all the old nobles, the servants of government, or the wrecks of the grand army: it is only millionaires that are in all our coteries.

O misery of the age! the son of a servant, who has attained by usury the condition of a millionaire, will see his gilded saloons filled with women of the highest rank. He will receive, the night before the ball he is to give, thirty billets signed by the highest names in fashionable circles, who ask the privilege to be enrolled on his list; and these same women, renowned in society, would blush to be seen in the saloon of our first actress. See what great talents have gained by the revolution!

In the mean time, our artists can expect no more honors, considering the society Mademoiselle Contat consorted with in prison, where she was found, when the prison doors were thrown open, incarcerated with many ladies of the court of Louis XVI. Her taste for distinguished people, her gratitude for the love of a prince that a throne and exile have since rendered illustrious, would necessarily draw upon her persecution from the *rulers of terror*: she

was imprisoned in the Madelonnettes with those who were then called the aristocrats of the French theatre. One circumstance, which revealed an interesting trait in her character, put her life in jeopardy. The queen, previous to her imprisonment, wished to see her personate the character of governess in a favorite play ; but this was a part she had not performed. However, in twenty-four hours, she committed to memory the five hundred verses of the part ; then she wrote to the person who had announced to her the desire of the queen : "I was ignorant where was the seat of memory ; I know now it is in the heart."

This letter, which was published by order of the queen, caused the decree from the revolutionary tribunal for the arrest of Mademoiselle Contat ; when the ninth of Thermidor arrived, she was free.

One could not often see Mademoiselle Contat without being won by the charm of her conversation, and impressed by a certain loftiness of manner, which, without being theatrical, had something imposing. Her character was high-spirited and imperious, but at the same time feeling and generous ; thus she readily sympathized with those whose qualities were noble,

and whose defects did not narrow the spirit. Her self-respect and consciousness of her own superiority prevented her from feeling humiliation, or a desire to rebel against the forms imposed by society; she conversed with the Marchioness de J*** and the Countess de N*** in the same manner that they conversed with each other, without embarrassment as without familiarity.

Living for a long time in the same prison, sharing the same obnoxious opinions, and suffering together for the same cause, an intimacy ensued, which continued long after the reëstablishment of order and ancient prejudices. This rendered the saloon of Mademoiselle the rival of the best saloons in Paris.

A singular feeling attracted me towards her: this was a resemblance she bore to my mother. After two years of mourning, the most sad I ever experienced, I attended, for the first time since the loss of my mother, the French theatre; and my emotions were so overpowering in seeing this resemblance, that I became faint, and was carried out of the house. My emotion was renewed each time that I attended the theatre; in vain I attempted to vanquish it; I at length resigned myself to visit it no more on the

evenings that Mademoiselle Contat was to appear.

This was a great deprivation to me, who place in the first rank of intellectual pleasures, that of seeing the high comedy well performed. By a whimsical coincidence, such as we sometimes see, this woman, whom I had avoided as a painful remembrance, moved to a house next mine. Her house was situated in the suburbs of Paris, in the Street de la Rochefoucauld ; a quarter of the town at this day densely peopled, but then very desolate.

The pestilential effluvias of the prison rendered space and fresh air essential to renew her vigor ; and she selected this mansion, which had a large garden attached to it, as a substitute for a house in the country.

A very low wall separated her garden from mine. From the windows of my apartment I could overlook the parterre, the lawn, and the alley, where she daily walked. When the weather permitted, I walked the length of the wall that separated our row of lindens each side of it, and I listened with delight to the accents of that voice which had before overwhelmed me ; for time operates in a strange manner upon the feelings of the heart, and the remembrance which is

to-day insupportable becomes to-morrow the luxury of grief.

I have no language to describe the emotions I experienced in recovering again, from an entire stranger, the looks, the gestures, all the modulations of that voice I was accustomed to obey: the same gracious smile which consoled me in all my troubles. My imagination was exalted by this resemblance, almost to delirium. I sometimes passed entire hours in contemplating her beautiful visage, following with my eyes every movement of this being that had the effect upon me of a resurrection.

It was impossible that such preoccupation should not be remarked: Mademoiselle Contat wished to know the name of the young neighbor who passed all the time that they were both in the garden in gazing upon her.

"I know her well," was the reply of Viscount de Ségur. And he drew a portrait of me, which, with the gallantry of the old régime, was flattered to the extreme. I had the merit in his eyes of having received him at a time when his heraldic escutcheon and aristocratic emblems were compromising his friends as well as himself. But I love all people of courage; and he who braves *sans culottisme*, in preserving the

costume of the ancient régime, it pleases my eyes to behold; I should have felt shame in fearing what he feared so little. My fearlessness was rated at the worth of his courtly devotion; for with M. de Ségur gallantry mingled itself even with his friendships. Age, do what it would with him, was quite put aside: he treated it as the revolution, and sacrificed to it none of his habits.

He came to see me after visiting Mademoiselle Contat, and repeated the conversation he had had with her relative to me. Then, fearing to pass for a curious and importunate neighbor, I confessed to him the cause of my singular behaviour, and added that Mademoiselle Contat should have reason to complain of me no longer.

"She complains of you not the least in the world," replied the viscount; "on the contrary, she is charmed with the pleasure you take in surveying her; but why not give yourself this pleasure more at your ease? You are here as in a village; and in the country they neighbor it always."

"I dare not; besides, you know I came here to live in retirement." "Ah! you are wrong; Mademoiselle Contat receives at her house all that remains of the best company in

Paris ; and it may be said, without offending you, that at her house one is not exposed to meet the clever Jacobins who are frequently to be seen in your assemblies." "Ah ! Jacobins ! you deceive yourself ; these are the bright spirits, born of the revolution, that put to proof the new ideas." "To me it is all one ; I hate equally those who caused the revolution, and those who profit by it." This was a hit upon Talma, who had wedded the talented Julia ; she who still loved the Viscount Ségur.

A few days after this conversation, Viscount Ségur called in with M. Vigée, an intimate friend of Mademoiselle Contat, and brought me an invitation to come to her house and listen to the reading of a poem by the author, who was our common friend. The subject was the Merit of Woman, a poem in which Legouvé had related with touching sensibility some traits of heroism and generosity evinced by women during the reign of terror : he had selected the most celebrated, for many volumes could scarcely contain the narrations of all the noble and sublime deeds of women from all ranks in society. These devoted beings, without pomp, without hope, are such as every woman might offer in herself for a model : it is their multiplicity that prevents

them from being known. In France it is only the rare and new that is noticed; people have such a horror of the common that no one will mention these heroic deeds, even as he crosses the street.

It has sometimes been asked, how such women, so heroic and self-sacrificing, could so soon descend again to common life, and embroil themselves in all the turmoils and vexations of narrow souls. It is that women have one defect which neutralizes all their virtues, — *vanity*. The false revolution having levelled all ranks, annihilated all pretensions, absorbed all their egoism, the women of that time submitted only to the generous impulses of their own hearts.

The next morning I received one of those notes, written with that inexpressible charm which Mademoiselle Contat knew how to impart to the merest trifle. It contained a most pressing invitation to me to visit her, conveyed in language simple, graceful, and piquant, mingled with compliments exquisitely expressed, and with such conversational grace as has caused her to be entitled, *la Reine du billet*.

PART II.

I entered the saloon of Mademoiselle Contat with fear and trembling; for I feared losing something of the illusion which rendered her so dear to me. She was the first person of her profession that I had seen so near, and I feared that in the higher circles her tone would not be in keeping with the elegance of her talent; but her distinguished manners, her affectionate politeness, left me not long in doubt: nothing within the saloon recalled to your mind that you were in the saloon of an actress, — neither the mistress of the house nor the guests assembled. Ladies of rank, ladies distinguished for accomplishments, intelligence, and beauty, were guests; amongst them, my eye lighted upon one of exquisite beauty, who gained so much from a near view that I could scarcely recognize her for the same person I had seen in public. She was the only woman of the French theatre who was at this epoch admitted to the circles of Mademoiselle Contat; and all those who have since admired the modest grace and native refinement

and elegance of Mademoiselle Mars sanctioned this exclusive preference.

The men whom I met at this soirée were mostly from the aristocratic ranks; but there was not one of the great personages of the day. Save some young authors, the saloon was composed of persons more or less injured by the revolution, and who, by surrendering themselves to the thousand nameless graces and charms of conversation, hope to quaff the oblivious cup of Lethe.

Count Louis de Narbonne, Marquis de Jaucourt, Viscount de Ségur, Marquis de Girardin, Marquis de Gontaut Saint Blancar, MM. Vigée, Dezprez, de Parny, represented the wit, gaiety, and gallantry of the ancient régime; and youthful talents dilated eloquently upon the dramatic and literary innovations which appeared every day. It must be confessed that the epoch in which we live is that of the decay of romantic literature; the age which gave birth to *Atala*, *René*, *Pinto*, *Edward in Scotland*, and *Christopher Columbus*, was she not the cradle of the romantic poem and the historical drama? The innovations which form the boast of the present day, have they surpassed the creations of *Atala*, of *Père Aubry*, of *René*?

The most beautiful pages of our modern prose-writers, are they more rich in thought, sweeter in melancholy, than the *fragments of Corinne* and the *imprecations of Velleda*? The dramas of passion which challenge our admiration at the present day, do they thrill the heart like the *Mère Coupable* in the *Misanthropie et Repentir*? Ah! if sobs could be weighed, how much would those obtained from the two works just named outweigh the receipts of tears from our present dramas!

Knowing that I should meet no one at the house of Mademoiselle Contat whom it would not be an honor to know, I begged M. de Ségur to point out to me the most distinguished of the guests; to which request he readily acceded.

“This little man, his eyes cast down, his posture so humble, who always nestles in a corner of the saloon, where one must seek him to find him, is Colin d’Harleville. The success of his *Vieux Célibataire*, which he has attributed justly to Mademoiselle Contat, could alone induce him to be here this evening; for he lives retired from the world, where he creates no sensation: his only pretension is gentleness, his only ambition modesty. He is the violet of the

Institute; but his enemies pretend that this violet has a law-suit pending with all his family."

"What signifies? he has, nevertheless, written the *Inconstant*, the *Châteaux en Espagne*, and the part of Madame Evrard, which seemed as one forgotten by Molière."

"I admire all that, but still more his superb hatred against that great assassin, Fabre d'Eglantine, who had more talent than he. This last, the rogue! in one of his whimses, conceived a droll device, that of replacing the names of the saints of the calendar by the names of vegetables! I sought in his new calendar to find his name for my patron saint: * I discovered that my title was to be *Frizzled Cabbage*."

I laughed at this folly, which the frizzled head of the viscount rendered comical enough. I then asked him who was that fat, powdered gentleman talking with Colin d'Harleville.

"He is Desfaucherets, the author of *Secret Marriage*, to whom Mademoiselle Contat honestly believes she owes a triumph which was only due to her incomparable acting. Old as he is, she founds great hope upon his talent;

* Alluding to the Catholic custom of adopting the name of the patron saint.

but she deceives herself: his *Marriage Secret* will be the story of his life, and a story badly enough written."

"There is always some credit due to one who can avail himself of the genius of another."

"Without doubt, the tree which cannot ripen in the full wind must have recourse to the espalier. There you see one who can walk by the light of his own genius," added he, pointing out to me a young man whose striking physiognomy foretold all that he has since become.

"I know him," said I; "he is the author of *Agamemnon*: one of his friends brought him into my box, whilst the public were applauding with great acclamations, and summoning him to appear after this first representation of his tragedy. His manner of receiving the homage offered gave me a great idea of his true dignity. It is so rare at a public triumph to see an author without ridiculous vanity or hypocritical humility!" — "Ah! my friend, you risk nothing in unlimited praise of such a man; for even his works themselves do not declare the whole man."

Then M. de Ségur called my attention to M. de Parny, and told me that the nephew of that erotic poet, captivated many years since with

Mademoiselle Contat, had, it was said, married her ; but that she would not have the marriage made public until she quitted the theatre. That they should be mutually enamored surprised no one ; for, notwithstanding her forty years and her *embonpoint*, Mademoiselle Contat was still very charming ; and in the young man, with the most beautiful countenance, was united the most elegant French contour ; but that which doubled his advantages was the little account he made of them. Never have I seen beauty in a man more universally acknowledged, or more easily pardoned.

“ There’s my young partner,” continued M. de Ségur, designating to me M. Emmanuel Dupaty : “ we have been composing together a French opera, a little work which was set to music at your house in the country, by Della Maria. He is indeed the most amiable coadjutor, this dear Emmanuel ; first, because he writes three quarters of the work ; next, because he *mixes in* such well-turned couplets, and has such a flow of wit ; but, above all, he says such sweet and comical things, designed to hit the lovers and coquettes, that they play these parts with a zeal all their own. I regret that I had not him for a coadjutor in my *Yellow Cabriolet* ; then it

would not have been so rudely hissed off the stage. Heard you," added he, "of the outrageous abuse of the republicans, as I was yesterday evening coming out of the Feydeau? The rascals began to cry at the top of their voices, "*Le Cabriolet Jaune* of M. de Ségur!" And God knows all the abuse and jibes I had to encounter before I got to my cabriolet. "He has fallen!" said some. "How! so soon risen?" said others. Happily I laughed more than any one, and my gayety disconcerted their malice.

In fact, nothing can equal the hearty gayety with which the viscount sacrifices himself to a joke. He has, as others, his complement of absurdities; but he knows his peculiarities, loves and cherishes them, and makes others love them also. He loves sport, and is willing that his foibles should promote it.

For instance: this evening mademoiselle had recourse to him to beguile her guests of the tedium of waiting for Legouv  , whose habit it was always to arrive too late. This, in him, did not proceed from impoliteness, neither was it calculated for effect: he lounged, — that was all.

Then the *antique* reigned, as now the *rococo*.

Fashion, that despotic fairy, who metamorphoses to her liking people and things, had, at a stroke of her wand, changed the saloon to an atrium, the fauteuils to *chaises* curules, the coats to *tunics*, the goblets to *coupes*, the shoes to *co-thurnes*, and the guitars to *lyres*.

One of these revived lyres had been presented to Mademoiselle Contat; but, of all the amateurs of the guitar who were present, not one could or would offer his services, from fear that this Pindaric lyre would force the musician to assume an attitude that might appear ridiculous. The Viscount Ségur alone had the courage to accept the lyre from the hands of Mademoiselle Contat, and to accompany himself in a new song.

The anti-Grecian costume of the musician; his head dressed in little frizzled curls, and powdered; his air and mien of the old court; his fifty years, his cracked voice, and his pronunciation, which was in the fashion of *ci-devant* exquisites of the court of Versailles; the lyre, borne in the style of Phidias, — all this offered the image of an Apollo so grotesque that I could not withhold my bursts of laughter.

I was not then possessed of that charitable hypocrisy which enjoys the ridiculous in silence; and, besides, I had at bottom a great fund of

friendship for M. de Ségur, and we too frequently think we may dispense with politeness towards those we love. My unrestrained mirth was the signal to all those who had before stifled it, and the laugh resounded. The viscount, who would not lose his share in the merriment he produced, moved forward his chair in such a manner as to view himself in a mirror; and he made so much sport with his Olympic handling, then he sung with so much liveliness one of the prettiest songs of his brother, that each one applauded as sincerely, and took as much pleasure in admiring, as they had an instant before in diverting themselves at his expense.

At length Legouvé was announced; he came from the theatre, where he had been detained from interest in the début of his pupil, Mademoiselle Duchesnois, who made the house resound with acclamations every time that she performed the part of Phèdre.

The table was prepared, with the glass of sugared water; and the talkers, who had withdrawn to another room, reëntered the saloon: it was then that I perceived Alexander Duval, which surprised me; for I believed him for ever embroiled with the mistress of the house. Speaking of this circumstance to M. de Ségur,

“How green you are,” he said, with an air of pity, “in thinking that two persons who mutually need each other can afford to be seriously offended! It is true, that, at the last rehearsal of Duval’s new comedy, there arose a little debate between the author and actress: Mademoiselle Contat, who could not obtain from Duval a change that she required in one scene, actually threw the sheets containing her part away from her; Duval, picking them up, and taking the manuscript from the prompter, withdrew, affirming that the piece should not be performed, as he should make no changes. It is true that all this has put the theatre in tumult: it is not known which will carry the day, the will of the woman or that of the Breton; but, as the play promises great success to the actress, and the actress to the play, their common interest will soon bring them together.”

This is the same work that, owing to the applauses of the Duke de Choiseul, and the eulogiums of Viscount Ségur, was rendered suspicious to the first consul, and brought the author a decree of exile.

The same fate at the same hour befell M. Emmanuel Dupaty. Certainly, in his play, entitled *L’Antichambre*, the author could not have

foreseen that it would be taken as a burlesque upon the dawning court, which was soon to witness kings in attendance.

Innovators flee at a shadow; and he who meditated to engraft a court of Louis XIV. upon a troop of republican soldiers, might with reason fear to see the burlesque essays of these new lords served up for public ridicule.

In this little play, so gay, which would still charm the house if all the old talent could revive in the present performers, a disguised valet, who pretends to be a gentleman and brave soldier, speaks of having been many years in *service*. This very innocent pun was denounced to the first consul as an insult to the army; and immediately M. Dupaty was arrested by the gendarmes, carried to Brest in a post-chaise, and confined in a ponton,—a sort of aquatic dungeon, where ennui, bad nourishment, and pestilential vapors, suffer not the prisoners to become old.

These examples, joined to so many other disgraceful ones that have preceded or followed, prove that, under governments too strong or too feeble, genius and talent are treated as enemies, which, in our opinion, is better than to be neither protected nor persecuted; for hatred stimulates, whilst indifference paralyzes.

PART III.

At the first accents of the deep and sonorous voice of Legouv  , all conversation ceased. At the announcement of the title of the poem, *The Merit of Women*, the fops of the saloon risked some worn-out jokes by way of preface, and the wags smiled with such an air, as much as to say, "Please to inform me what that is." M. de S  gur whispered in my ear, smiling, "*The Merit of Women*. Ah ! so much the better ; surely the rehearsal cannot be long."

In reality it appeared long to no person. The lines upon the Sisters of Charity, and upon the heroism of Madame de Sombreuil, drew many tears from the audience. We all applauded the feeling and talent of the author with equal enthusiasm. Those of us who had escaped from the horrors of execution still trembled at the recollection of the bloody deeds they had witnessed ; and in this description of the poet they felt keenly moved : "Fear reigns everywhere : no more affection, — no more love. The Frenchman is enemy to the Frenchman : each one looks for death, — no one is secure. Woman alone,

with a zeal ingenious and tender, averts the death which threatens the beloved: she dares to face the tyrant in his fury," &c.

In listening to these lines, we all felt a little pride; for we all had our share in the application: we had all given more or less proofs of courage. The poet excited our pity for the victims of the revolution, and admiration at the many noble sacrifices made by women: many times during the recital, all eyes were directed to Madame de Lebrun, who, we might say, was driven from France by her friends. She was upon the point of sacrificing her life for the honor of endowing our country with the most beautiful portrait of the martyr-queen. Our admiration of her genius was enhanced by our respect for her character. In her courageous fidelity to her august protectors, she had won our admiration; and her fidelity to their memory has in later days fortified her in resisting all the seductions of the empire. Never was there a woman more richly endowed with graces by Heaven. Madame Lebrun was at the same time beautiful and lovely, brilliant and simple, intellectual and good. She painted the thought as much as the feature, and has given her portraits a truth and charm of expression

that evinced her skill in eliciting the ideal. Poetry was in all she did, thought, and said : it discovered itself in her art, in her conversation, even in her attire and ornaments ; but society pardons her originality, and permits a departure from the canons of fashion, considering she makes no pretensions. The countenance of Madame Lebrun was resplendent this evening with all the brilliancy of youth, though her prime dated long before the revolution. But she was so happy to find herself again in France, surrounded by genius and talent, that her eyes shone with the lustre of joy ; and her fresh complexion, her fair and beautiful locks, her animated expression, fostered a complete illusion upon the point of age ; for she had all the charms that one loves in youth.

Her brother, M. Vigée, a writer of talent, was so overflowing in gratitude to Mademoiselle Contat for her perfect representation of the heroine in *Entrevue*, that he was inspired to address many very pretty verses to her. A tint of pedantry marred the lightness and grace of the productions of this learned Greek professor, and overwhelmed the merest trifle with ridiculous pomp. His effusions were overlaid with epigrams. Arnault pretended that he lectured

in the womb of his mother. Even Mademoiselle Contat sometimes diverted herself over his solemn futility ; then he would become offended, which increased the sport. But these defects did not impeach his goodness or his intellect ; and he devoted himself, heart and soul, to the culture of the youthful talents of which he believed himself the director.

Legouv   was of the number whom the professor aided and injured. There was in the genius of Legouv   a very slight resistance, scarcely perceptible, to dramatic shackles ; but the timid zeal of the young author was repressed by the professor of routine. The very abuse of the *out-law freedom*, which is sometimes manifested, proves the necessity of a change in our theatres. Legouv   wrote a tragedy called the *Death of Abel* : it is easy to conceive all the obstacles raised by the managers from the primitive subject, and the unprecedented costume ; but, from the eulogiums and recommendations of Vig  e, the managers decided to hazard the work, and Vig  e's fiat commanded success. The result from the counsels of Vig  e was that Cain, designed after Bible history, should speak as Orestes in Voltaire, Abel as Zaire ; and that the quaint simplicity and naturalness of the narra-

tion of the first crime, as it stands in the Bible; should disappear in the polished language of the criminal and his victim. The author's self-guidance would have been better, as is evident from some beautiful scenes where his talent braved the routine and ferule of his friend.

I had often heard of the Count Louis de Narbonne, — of his ancient love for Mademoiselle Contat; and, though we had never met, I soon discovered him. There was so much taste and grace in his eulogiums addressed to Legouv  , so much refined pleasantry in all that he said of the *Merit of Women*, that I judged him to be the favorite of the sex. The friendship that he preserved for Mademoiselle Contat was for the honor of both; it is so rare to love truly and long her whom one has loved too much. And then for a man of the world to remain the friend of one who loves another, — this gives the idea that he is more than amiable; this he has sufficiently proved, at least during his ministry, by a great number of noble and courageous actions.

The ill-will excited by the rivalry between two agreeables long outlived the charms and the success from which it sprung. Thus the Viscount S  gur, whilst rendering justice to the

merit of M. de Narbonne, still showed his pique: He reproached him, above all, for his complaisance in permitting Madame de Stael to accompany him when he made his tour, as minister of war, to survey all the forts upon our frontiers. The Viscount de Ségur revealed to me, *à propos* to this tour, a charming word of Baron de Stael, which is worth all the sayings related of his wife, and has moreover the advantage of being unique and little known.

A short time after quitting the ministry, M. de Narbonne, who had not mended his fortune by his office, was persecuted with bitterness by his creditors. An indiscreet friend informed Madame de Stael, that M. de Narbonne was to be imprisoned that day, unless he could immediately advance the sum of thirty thousand francs. Then, prompted by ardent friendship, Madame de Stael went to her husband, and described to him the distressed situation of Count Louis, and asked if there were no means of relieving him.

“Ah! you overwhelm me with joy,” exclaimed M. de Stael; then, drawing from his portfolio the sum which would insure the freedom of M. de Narbonne, he handed it to his wife, adding in a penetrating tone, “Judge of

my happiness! I believe I have freed your lover!"

Supper being announced, M. de Parny led me to the dining room, and took the place of master of the house, in a manner that left me no doubt of his marriage with Mademoiselle Contat.

Scarcely were we seated at the table, served with *recherche* and elegance, than a messenger was announced from the French theatre.

Mademoiselle, much vexed at being recalled to the irksome cares of her profession at this moment of social enjoyment, replied that it was too late for her to attend to affairs of the theatre, and that the messenger must call the next day.

"But, madame," said the servant, "it is M. Florence himself that has come, in the name of the committee, upon very important business: he will not go without speaking to madame."

"Indeed!" ejaculated Mademoiselle Contat, with some passion; "show him into my cabinet, and I will join him presently."

"Ah! show him in here," cried Madame de J***; let us see Florence as ambassador: we have only seen him in the humble line of confidant." — "He is there the least troublesome, if less conspicuous; you could hardly believe that the most ordinary actor should be the best mana-

ger. He has a will that conquers you, you know not how ; but I have the audacity to brave it, when it opposes mine."

"I know not what his demand is to-night," said Vigée to me in a whisper ; "but I will wager a hundred to one that he will obtain it."

Florence, summoned with acclamations from all the guests, appeared, and saluted them with the habitually humble air appropriate to his humble part. There was a solemn silence, as if he had come forward upon the stage to announce some failure to the audience : in effect his situation was much the same ; for he informed us that a sudden illness had attacked Talma, and would prevent his performing in the play fixed upon for the next evening ; and that, under this embarrassment, the company supplicated Mademoiselle Contat to appear in the *Misanthrope* and the *Fausse Confidences*, adding, with address, that she alone could recompense the public and the cashier of the theatre for the failure of Talma.

The most decided refusal followed this flattering truth : any other than Florence would have been completely discouraged ; for the disdainful smile and imperious tone seemed to leave no room for hope. Still he insisted ; he pleaded, in behalf of the company, for those of the audience

who had engaged boxes for the year, all uselessly : to this harangue, Mademoiselle Contat replied with impatience, "I will not play to-morrow, let me be quiet ;" or, as one would say to an importunate mendicant, "Go away, I have no money."

The manager, having now exhausted his eloquence in vain entreaties, fell back a few steps, as if he designed to withdraw ; then he suddenly approached : "In truth, madame, you are unmerciful," said he, with an accent of despair, "to oblige me at this hour to proceed to Madame Petit,* to awaken her, and conjure her to become your substitute to-morrow in *La Mère Coupable*. This would be a barbarity, for she is in suffering : however, she will play, I am sure of that, — she has so much of the *l'esprit de corps*."

The greatest genius is not proof against the infirmities of self-love, and I cannot paint the magical effect produced upon Mademoiselle Contat by the name of Madame Petit, *à propos* to a part in which this last was much her superior.

"Now observe," said Vigée to me, smiling, "we shall see the play commence." In truth, Mademoiselle Contat, quickly changing her tone, said, with a sort of commiseration, "How ! it is

* Mademoiselle Vanhove, since Madame Talma.

near midnight, and you are going to torment this poor woman to make her play to-morrow ! It is you who are merciless."

"Without doubt I shall fulfil a painful duty," replied Florence ; "but how avoid it?"

"Strange that there can be no suspension on account of indisposition !"

"It is impossible, madame ; colds have already done enough injury to the parts this month. We cannot sacrifice the receipts."

"Truly this is farcical ! to hear him, one would believe that upon me alone is depending the life of the actors and the success or ruin of the theatre ! This is not common sense."

"Nevertheless, it is true," resumed the manager, with the brightening look of an advocate, who sees the success of his manoeuvre. "But, madame, I have already too long abused your patience," added he, bowing, and preparing to depart.

The Viscount de Ségur, who perceived from the first the change that the name of Madame Petit had wrought in the determination of Mademoiselle Contat, lent himself to her aid by blaming with assumed warmth her resistance to the entreaties of the company, and the desires of the public. Each one, divining the charitable

intentions of M. de Ségur, united with the flattering censor in urging her to comply with the request of the manager, till Mademoiselle Contat, charmed to see herself constrained to do what she wished, recalled Florence, and said to him, "Since every body determines it shall be so, I will play to-morrow *Le Misanthrope* and *Les Fausses Confidences*."

PART IV.

A few years after, Mademoiselle Contat hired the Chateau d'Ivry, near Paris. Madame d'Hautcourt, former proprietor of the chateau, had had constructed a very pretty hall for a theatre, which was an inducement to Madame de Parny to occupy the mansion, as she wished to avail herself of this little theatre for the dramatic débuts of her daughter.

This young person, with an elegant form, distinguished intellect, and cultivated manners, did not possess enough beauty for the heroine of a drama, and was of too high a tone of character for the inferior parts. It was easy to perceive

that she had not been educated for the theatre ; but, in case of failure of her expected fortune, she wished to acquire one by her talent. Notwithstanding the security she might feel from her fine memory, her own intelligence, and the counsels of her mother, she was of an extreme timidity ; and it was for her encouragement, and that she might feel accustomed to the stage, that Madame de Parny determined that she should make her début at the little theatre of Ivry, before a public of indulgent friends.

The theatrical début was appointed for the day of the fête of Louise Contat. The *chef-d'œuvre* of Molière was selected for the occasion, and the greatest talents of the company tendered their services to second the début of the young Amalric. But, by a calculation very well understood, her mother wished to mix some talented amateurs amongst these imposing professors of the art ; and she distributed the parts in such a manner that each performer made his début in the one assigned him for that evening. This broke up the superiority of the company, and assured to the young débutante an advantage over those who played the principal parts.

Scarcely had the news of this fête circulated, when Madame de Parny received from all sides

requests to be admitted. But she only invited persons of her acquaintance, from fear of intimidating the young Dorine.

Mademoiselle Mars, so lovely in the character of the simple maiden, had not yet attempted those parts in which Mademoiselle Contat had always been applauded. To pass from the simple to the grand was surely a great leap; and the timid perfection of Mademoiselle Mars would have long hesitated before assuming the higher characters, if Mademoiselle Contat had not, with as much grace as zeal, imparted to her her own conception of the commanding and queenly. The latter was transcendent in the majestic: in the pathetic she was excelled by Madame Petit.

Nothing could better evince Mademoiselle's true greatness of soul than her application to develop in Mademoiselle Mars the talent that was to dethrone her own. It was not that she, like all great powers, was not *en garde* of the heir presumptive; but here her heart outweighed all the interests of self-love. She loved Mademoiselle Mars, not only for herself, but for the love of her son, who adored the charming maiden; for Madame de Parny was a good mother, daughter, and sister; and these patriarchal virtues are the more meritorious in a suc-

cessful actress, who lives a gay life, calculated to distract her mind from family duties and affections.

The example and dramatic instruction of Mademoiselle Contat, joined to the exquisite taste of Mademoiselle Mars, brought to perfection that genius which still receives the just applauses of our children, after having exhausted our own. However, except in purity of diction, and correct pronounciation of good French, of which the tradition loses something every day, the talents of Mademoiselle Contat and Mademoiselle Mars offered no points of resemblance. The one had a more exalted imagination; the other, a more exquisite taste.

It has been said that the great actor, Molé, owed his talent, so full of warmth and of soul, to the love which Mademoiselle Contat inspired in him whilst acting the part of her lover upon the stage. The real love, deep as the foundations of his nature, was only hearkened to there; and one can easily conceive that his whole soul would be poured forth, and he would be so eloquent in pleading his own cause to his beloved at the only season granted, that in the theatre, indeed, he would be no actor.

It is happy for the talent of the artist, when a

woman who rejects his suit is obliged to listen every evening in public to his confessions and protestations of love, and even to feign a response. The voice then becomes rich in inflections, the actor disappears under the lover, and the sympathy which springs from truth operates as a charm upon the spectators. Perhaps the *hauteur* and indifference of the grand coquette are indispensable requisites for creating this sympathy; for ambitious love would excite more eloquence than love returned.

One part, in which Mademoiselle Contat wielded the sceptre with undivided sway, was that of Celimene.* Here, the accomplished Celimene was truly mistress of the house; she made sport and game of all the absurdities of her lover's friends, as they passed in review before her, that she might amuse herself with his vexation. Molé asserted, that, when in the scene in the fourth act, she turned herself away, repulsing him with disdain, the illusion was such that he felt himself withering under this powerful will, and was conscious only of the complete sway that a woman, false or true, might obtain over an impassioned lover.

* A character in a play of Molière's, called *Le Tartufo*.

The look which accompanied the word, or rather the decree, of Celimene, alone was sufficient to justify the feebleness of Alceste. This look, at the same time glowing with love and anger, explained the fascination which could draw a true heart within the grasp of a coquette ; who, though faithless, disdainful, perfidious, still impelled the lover to adore, obey, and trust, to endure all rather than lose her. Overcome by this invincible power, Molé naturally stammered the first lines of his reply, the effect of which was beyond all that art could attain.

But, if Mademoiselle Contat's loss to the theatre has never been supplied in the grand and imperious style, Mademoiselle Mars has greatly surpassed the former in the dignified and chaste style in which she personates Elmire, and the charming spontaneity with which she, not acts, but gives us Sylvia. The good taste, talent, natural and modest manners of this actress, render it easy for her to personate these characters. How many times, when admiring her in the part of Elmire, I have thought of the pleasure Molière would have felt in seeing himself comprehended in his most noble and delicate creations ! for, if he has created Elmire, we alone have seen her.

I love to connect a part of the superiority of Mademoiselle Mars in this part to the instructions of her gifted friend. As I complimented the latter upon that point, "You flatter me there," replied she; "the utmost that I have taught her has been to hold her elbows more naturally, and to change the attitudes of the young girl for the easy and elegant carriage of a lady who moves in the highest circles: her own intelligence has done the rest. She is a diamond, I say to you, not yet enchased as she ought to be; but you will soon see her resplendent."

And the name of *Diamond* still remains with Mademoiselle Mars. Why cannot *she* say as much of one of her pupils!

The day of the fête, a great dinner was to precede the play, and all the guests were assembled in the saloon, when Madame Parny entered, excusing herself for having made them wait, as she had been obliged to repair to Paris that morning to stand godmother, and she could not return in season to receive us. M. de Chazet, the young godfather, stood at the font with her.

Whilst saluting her guests, Madame Parny perceived a rich basket, of blue satin, filled with gloves, veils, ribbons, artificial flowers; in fine,

with all the ruinous trifles that a generous godfather would present upon such an occasion. Madame de Parny, having asked from whence came this basket, was answered, that it was a present from the young godfather.

The dinner was numerously attended, and the conversation was general ; for Madame de Parny had the skill to excite the interest of each one of her guests upon the same subject ; by a few piquant words, uttered in her fine tones, she could break up all *tête-à-tête*, and, without perceiving it, the talkers became listeners ; and when she had enlisted the general attention upon one alone, or several of the furnishers of conversation, she gave up all responsibility, knowing that the pleasure of being listened to would inspire the power of being amusing.

One of the brightest spirits of this sort was a young man, who afterwards, in three very diverse works, obtained the most brilliant success of any dramatist of his time : one may divine that I speak of the author of *La Vestale*, of *Sylla*, &c. Ah, well ! his talent and success in these works, so highly applauded, yielded to the exquisite gayety and enchanting wildness of his conversational powers. It was particularly in his literary discussions with M. de Longchamps that his

rhapsodies and wild wit furnished him with the most comical words and extravagant fancies ; then, when his enthusiasm, so inoffensive, so diverting, amused the whole company, he would laugh at himself, and disconcert the joke by entering into it.

The dessert led to songs innocently gay, in which Louisa was fêted, without fulsomeness or satiety, by all the poetical friends. In coming from table, we passed through the billiard-room, to see Fleury, who was an adept in that game : but, notwithstanding the pleasure he took in displaying his skill, Madame de Parny reminded him that he was expected at the theatre ; and soon a messenger was sent to tell him the play was to commence.

Madame de Parny having remained till that moment to do the honors of the saloon, it was believed that she had limited herself to the part of directress ; and the effect was indescribable when she made her *entrée*, her beautiful eyes and visage glowing, though partly shaded by the close mob cap with black lace trimmings she wore, as personating Madame Pernelle.

Before seeing her in this part, I doubted not but a person of skill would draw much from it, and it would give scope to exquisite talent. It

was the fanaticism of domestic tyranny, with all its folly, conceit, and stubbornness ; this was, indeed, the old woman, who, after having been too pretty for her repose, purchased absolution for her sins by the penance of the whole family. The feebleness and superstition of her son Orgon is naturally explained from the blind and stupid submission to her authority, enforced by his mother.

Madame de Parny has convinced me, that the inferior parts in great works ought not to be surrendered to substitutes ; for the conception and just performance in these characters reflect light upon the principal personages of the drama, and their manies or defects are the source from which follows the *denouement*.

Fleury was excellent in Orgon ; and it required much skill to transmute his refined features, so that they should have no expression but that of stupid credulity, and to change his rich tones to those of the frightened simpleton.

His daughter appeared simple and lovely in Marianne.

Amalric Contat gave proof of a talent well cultivated, which would neither fail nor succeed.

But the greatest interest of this evening was the *début* of Mademoiselle Mars in the character

which has since covered her with laurels ; this will always remain as a precious dramatic souvenir. Her beauty, which had not attracted enough attention in the simple costume of the modest maiden, was dazzling in the robe of satin, and elegant *toque* with white plumes of Elmire.

Upon the stage, beauty of features, loveliness of expression, will not lay hold of you (as the expression is at the present day) : good taste and brilliant ornaments are essential to *éclat*. Uniformity paralyzes the admiration of the vulgar, and furnishes no excitement : an actress, then, must flatter human inconstancy, and vary her ornaments. To appear under a new aspect is to be twice a beauty, as Mademoiselle Mars could convince herself, when she performed the part of Benjamin, in the play of *Joseph*. For three days nothing was talked of but the Jewish tunic and Arabian turban that she wore. It was not that they became her better than her ordinary costume ; but she was another person, and the ravished spectators made the house echo with their applauses, to thank her for looking so lovely. Our little public did the same in her Elmire ; and from our enthusiasm I saw spring the resolution in Mademoiselle Contat to play

this part no more, but to yield the sceptre to one who would wield it so well.

After the representation, the saloon of Mademoiselle Contat reëchoed with merited eulogiums upon the performers. We talked of the ability to give practical lessons, which is not always the gift of great performers; upon this subject Mademoiselle Contat cited the obligations she felt under to Madame Prévile at one time.

"I was," said she, "very much embarrassed with respect to my carriage; my memory was excellent, and my attention to seize the inflections in tone rendered the dialogue easy; but I knew not what to do with my arms; I fell into the mistake so common with amateurs, who multiply their gestures, believing it will give animation to the style; but it only renders it the colder. In order to correct me, Mademoiselle Prévile pinioned my arms each side of me, like those of a mummy, and then ordered me to rehearse without moving them. This was not difficult, so long as I spoke in verse only; but, as soon as the dialogue became animated, my arms moved involuntarily."

"Bravo!" exclaimed Madame Prévile, "there's a fine gesture, — graceful, lively, natural. Recollect, my child, that in a theatre, as in a saloon,

there are no good gestures except the involuntary ones, and all others should be prohibited."

I mention this lesson because I think it may be useful to professors, and above all to amateurs in the play.

A few years after she had retired from the theatre, Madame de Parny was attacked by the same malady that had carried off my mother. This conformity in features, voice, and disease, impressed me so much, that, since then, I have never heard of the decease of any one without trembling for the being who might resemble her ; and my presentiment has always been verified.

Dr. Corvisart alone possessed the confidence of Madame de Parny ; but he was subject to the gout, and made no visits except to the emperor. Madame de Parny, after consulting him many times, called in one day to get a prescription that she was to follow.

Corvisart had not risen when Madame de Parny arrived, and she was shown into his study ; she seated herself by the table where he ordinarily wrote. Corvisart had consulted with Dr. Hallé upon the means to be used, if they could not save, at least to prolong, the life of the patient ; and upon his table lay a letter he had

commenced, in which the name of Madame de Parny was many times on the page. She could not resist the desire of knowing what Corvisart said of her condition to M. Hallé, and her eyes fell upon a passage which said she could not live, in all probability, more than four months; and then were detailed the means of softening the acute sufferings from a cancer in the blood which would not admit of cure.

Just as she had read this, Dr. Corvisart entered the room: his eagle eye sought to discover if she had read his opinion. But the charming smile of Madame de Parny, her courage to save her friend the pain of knowing he had alarmed her by the terrors of a near death, deceived the fears of the doctor: he could not believe that generosity would inspire her with such strength. Pretending the necessity of keeping her feet warm, he insisted upon her drawing near to the fire, and negligently threw his handkerchief over the letter commenced. Madame de Parny looked with a moistened eye upon these useless cares; then, taking with her a prescription for an anodyne, which the doctor said, as he gave it, would ensure her a good night, she left him happy in the idea of the false hopes he had inspired her with.

The same evening her saloon was filled, and it was remarked that she had never conversed more charmingly, or with more interest; never had she even entered into the gaiety of the scene with more zest. Alas! her friends should have divined her terrible secret when they saw her that day cast upon her children a glance of pity, and embrace the youngest more frequently than was her wont.

Three months after, this saloon was again filled with the most distinguished persons; but mourning had taken the place of gayety, and the people of fashion, great artists, officers already covered with glory, illustrious authors, now formed a funereal train. This was the last duty, the last homage, rendered to the heart, the genius, the talent, of this celebrated actress.

THE SALOON

OF

EMPRESS JOSEPHINE.

It was the month of August, 1804 ; the emperor repaired to Boulogne, where two thousand of flat boats had been constructed with the design of landing his army upon the coasts of England. During this time, the Empress Josephine was to take the waters of Aix-la-Chapelle. People who seek in every, even the most inconsiderable, movements of their sovereigns, a hidden cause, to whom the apparent or real seems only a pretext, said in a whisper, that the imperial court, in this its crude state, were to meet to make their rehearsals of court ceremonies and etiquette near the old walls of the palace of Charlemagne. Under the Gothic arches of that cathedral where the emperors of Germany were crowned, and which still enclosed the baldric and the sword

of the greatest of our kings, it was whispered that the new sovereigns were to make their début.

At the report of this tour, the great and little authorities hastened to their posts ; some to receive and escort the princess, others to harangue her.

When the empress journeyed, her lessons were all prepared in advance ; written under the dictation of the emperor, even the slightest replies to the mayors and chattering prefects appointed to receive her. But it must be acknowledged, to the praise of Josephine, that her replies were never more gracious, more *à propos*, than when, from failure of memory, she forgot the commonplaces prescribed, and was obliged to express her thoughts *impromptu*.

Nothing can give a better idea of the character of this amiable Creole than the parallel drawn by Napoleon himself between her and Marie Louise.

"I have been much occupied," said he, "during my life, with two women, very different ; the one was art and grace, the other innocence and simple nature ; and each one had her worth.

"At no moment of her life did the first ever assume a position or attitude that was not grace-

ful and winning ; it would have been impossible to surprise her at any time when she could experience the least inconvenience ; all that art could devise to favor her natural attractions she made available, but with such mystery that it could never be discerned. The second, on the contrary, never even suspected that she could gain any thing in attractions by innocent artifices. The one would swerve a little from the right line ; the first movement was negation : the other was ignorant of dissimulation ; all evasion was foreign to her. One would never make any demands upon her husband's purse, but she owed everywhere ; the other never hesitated to ask for money when she needed more, which happened rarely ; she would not feel it possible to purchase any thing without paying immediately. As to the rest, they were both good-humored, gentle, and each very much attached to her husband ; I have always found them of the most equal temper, and perfectly complying."

The joy was universal in the department of the Roër, when news arrived that the empress was to visit there. As soon as I was informed, though suffering from illness, I quitted Paris, and hastened to rejoin my husband at Aix-la-

Chapelle, and aid him in the reception of the distinguished persons who were already arriving in the city, drawn by the near approach of the empress.

There were two descriptions of maladies amongst the crowd assembled here ; one attacked the body, the other the spirit. Those afflicted with bodily infirmities, who were agitated by noise and bustle, yielded their apartments to such as were disordered by ambition, and who, under pretext of taking the waters, were in reality lying in wait for vacant places at court. It was amusing to watch the little stratagems, the petty affectations, resorted to in order to gain what they affected to despise. Then the mockery, the critical remarks, uttered by persons not received at this imperial court, whom a refusal caused to treat the whole as a burlesque.

At this time there were no good roads in France, excepting those the emperor was to travel ; and, as the war had never led him to the department of the Roër, no one can figure to himself the ruinous condition in which the road leading from Liege to Aix-la-Chapelle had fallen : it was a series of precipices, where each traveller generally left some wrecks of his carriage. Having already on my own part broken

two vehicles, I determined to travel no more upon this abominable road, excepting on horse-back; but, as one could not propose this method of eluding the dangers and perils by the way to the Empress Josephine, it was decided to petition for repair. Under this stringent necessity, the inhabitants of Aix-la-Chapelle, in the most humble terms, supplicated the Minister of the Interior, who was the director of the highways, to be so good as to save their lives. The only reply to the humble petition was an order to botch up the enormous holes, such as would engulf the wheels of the carriages, in order to insure safety to the equipage of the empress and her suite, regardless of the demolition of all carriages disconnected with her train.

The poor abused people of Aix-la-Chapelle determined to have their revenge; and this is the way they attained it. Having ascertained the moment when the director was to pass this road to present himself to her majesty, they drew away the sand which had been thrown into the deep ruts and chasms, so that the director should upset as a simple private man, and even more awkwardly, on account of his extreme bulk.

The emperor, judging it proper, at the com-

mencement of the reign of the empress, that she should dwell in a house of her own, purchased a mansion at four times its worth, from one of the richest proprietors of Aix-la-Chapelle. His first motive was to conciliate the good-will of the inhabitants of the city, by inducing the belief that the empress would come the succeeding year, and take the waters; the second, because he believed that she and her court would be properly established. But the house of M. J***, small and ugly, was far from suitable for such hosts; and nothing can convey a better idea of the measure of Josephine's submission to the will of her royal spouse, than her resignation to remain in this barrack, even till his permission arrived, granting her request to accept the offer of M. Méchin, who was urgent to place the hotel of the prefecture at the disposal of her majesty.

It was here that were laid the foundations of that imperial court which was soon to become the most brilliant in Europe; it was here that the empress, aided by the reminiscences of the Viscountess Beauharnais, daily essayed the re-establishment of some usage smothered under the revolution, or sought the return of some respectful regulations immolated to the goddess Liberty.

It was not the good-will of the people which failed in seconding these efforts ; for power is never more craving for homage than the vulgar are assiduous to render it ; but the etiquette of a court could not be learned in a day : it requires long service to acquire tone and grace.

It was truly diverting to see this parody upon courts, as it might be called. The high and the low were equally at fault : one side assumed the air of patrons, and wore a mock majesty ; the other, with cringing gait and flattering smirk, bent in ludicrous submission ; whilst the court-code was forgotten or unknown to the greater part of those who were to impose or submit to it. Many can call to mind sundry ludicrous scenes, during the exile of the princess and her courtiers, remote from Paris, for the purpose of practising their parts. Scarcely did the performances commence of these puerile court-solemnities, evoked from the age of Louis XIV. than the blustering eagerness and blundering awkwardness of these *ci-devant* rough republicans excited the gayety even of the sovereigns themselves. Many can call to mind the first who prostrated themselves when they were only required to kneel ; but, unhappily, the most zealous

were those who committed the most sins against etiquette.

The kindness of the empress, her graceful manners, and the traditions of the court which her memory guarded, would have rendered another exacting; but her indulgence and patience were inexhaustible; virtues in the princess which Madame de Larochevoucauld and M. d'Harville, master of the horse, frequently groaned over. She replied smilingly to their reproaches, "This etiquette is good for born princes, habituated to the restraint it imposes; but as for me, who have had the happiness to live for so many years as a simple private woman, I think it good to pardon those who remember about as much as I do."

As soon as the princess was established at the hotel of the prefecture, then came the grand reception-day of the functionaries and inhabitants of the city; also the strangers of distinction who found it convenient to take the waters of Aix-la-Chapelle at that precise time.

It was in this circle that I met again, for the first time after her elevation, this lovely woman, whom I had frequently seen in the world of fashion, and particularly at the house of our

common friend, Madame Cabarus, since Princess of Chimay.

I shall never forget meeting her at a dinner at Madame de Fonfrède's, a few days after Bonaparte was elevated to the office of commander-in-chief of the army.

The dinner hour had arrived, and Bonaparte had not appeared; but Madame Bonaparte insisted that the hostess should not delay for her husband. This appeared very natural, and the company passed to the dining room, the vacant place at the foot of the table being reserved for the future vanquisher of Italy.

Bonaparte soon arrived, and seated himself in the vacant place; seeing he was not waited for, he felt freed from the necessity of apology. "Ah! there he comes," said Madame Bonaparte to the master of the house; then the host waved his hand to the young general, Madame Tallien smiled with her usual grace, and no more notice was taken of the incident.

The Marquis de Livry, who was seated by my side, was the only one who spoke of him. It is true that the marquis's mania for observation ruled supreme, and he would recognize the age of every one in a manner quite desolating to such as wished to shroud it in mystery. He

has been known to tell the age of people whom he has never seen, and that in defiance of all the miracles for the preservation of youth; thus, Madame V*** herself, whose beautiful countenance scarcely announced half her years, had been registered by him to her exact number. He made himself complete in this science by a daily study of the state registers, and a profound research into baptismal certificates. He was versed in all the intrigues, all the incidents, of love and jealousy in the court of love; at least with those appertaining to distinguished characters who were before the public. These accomplishments gained him more enemies than even his vices; though he passed for a gamester, was something of a libertine, and was called spitefully malicious. The majestic beauty of Madame de Cambis, that of Madame Château Regnaud, the bright eyes and charming countenance of Madame Noailles, in fine, even the irresistible charms of Madame Tallien, who was also at this dinner, exempted them not from his envenomed tongue. The age of those ladies, even their most secret preferences, were all proclaimed. Happily they could with impunity brave their former indiscretions: the fact was, he could array against them only the imprudences of one

or two years. Well! we all detested him, but still every one gave him a flattering reception; for each flattered herself into the belief that she should purchase his silence by cajolery.

I was too young at this period to feel any fear from his mania, so he spoke to me with entire freedom. "This young man," said he, designating Bonaparte, "is lover of a woman six years older than himself, which, in Creole style, is equivalent to a dozen; for, in the colonies, the women are old at thirty-four years." "I am not astonished that he loves her," replied I, looking at Madame Bonaparte: "she is very charming." "Ah! that which is best in her," rejoined he, "is her ascendancy over Barras; it is said she very adroitly availed herself of her influence by obtaining a fine command for her husband. As to the rest, Heaven owes this poor woman some conjugal compensation; for her first husband rendered her very unhappy; light and inconstant, like a man of the world, there was some inconvenience in living with him; for he was one of that shameful species of jealous husbands who affect to give their wives great liberty in public at the cost of terrible scenes enacted in private. Beginning by suspecting his wife, the Viscount Beauharnais ended

by suing a divorce from her; but, in defect of any proof of guilt, the tribunat compelled them to live together; and, the husband fearing to abandon his wife, they both resolved to be frankly reconciled. But the unfortunate woman gained only a change of wretchedness: her husband was arrested upon a false accusation by the terrorists; Josephine took so many steps to procure his release from prison, that she was imprisoned herself in consequence; and, after having long deplored her fate for being associated in life with a man unfaithful and jealous, she wept his death as if he had never done her the least wrong. There you have the women," added he: "they love and lament only those who tyrannize over them." "Her new husband will never enact the tyrant," I rejoined; "for he appears quite submissive."

"With that brow and profile, he will submit to no one," remarked M. de Livry; "I have studied Lavater, and, if he is right, this spirited galliard will never be in leading-strings."

The penetration of M. de Livry was not the gift of any other person in the company; for there was but little attention paid to Bonaparte. In the meantime, he had just been appointed commander-in-chief of the Italian army; but

that army, reduced, failing in all needful supplies, threatened by the forces of a most powerful coalition, offered little chance of success; I can truly affirm that no one foresaw his triumphs.

Coming from table, we passed into a saloon filled with flowers; Madame Bonaparte became faint, and the jonquils, the hyacinths, the heliotropes, which perfumed the room, were accused; but Madame Tallien, inclining towards me, gave me to understand that this indisposition was the natural effect of her situation. I still see the charming smile which irradiated the features of Bonaparte as he overheard this confidence. The beautiful Madame Tallien always loved to please her friends, and presage what would be agreeable to them.

As soon as Madame Bonaparte recovered, her husband quitted her to return to the directory: he spoke some moments in a whisper to his wife, pressed her hand, did not appear to hear the farewell of Madame Tallien, passed me without looking, and went out. During Madame Bonaparte's faint turn, we had unbound the cincture that encircled her waist. We passed into the elegant boudoir of Madame de Fonfrède; there Madame Tallien attracted my attention to the present, the only nuptial present, given by Bona-

parte to Josephine: it was a simple necklace of hair attached to a gold plate, upon which was engraven these words: *Au Destin!* How has this destiny been since fulfilled!

Since the day of the dinner, I had not seen Madame Bonaparte, excepting at fêtes given in honor of the conqueror of Lodi and Arcole. I supposed myself completely forgotten by her, when she proved to the contrary at the presentation of the ladies of Aix-la-Chapelle.

I found in this circle many women of great beauty. The most remarkable was, without contradiction, Madame Méchin; there was also the wife of the commissary of the army, called Madame M***, whose figure and countenance would have created a sensation even in the most elegant saloon; the wife of General Franceschi, a handsome brunette, whose beautiful eyes revealed too plainly a lingering regret at having preferred her husband to a brother of the emperor, when she could have married either. Then there was Baroness Fhurt, lovely representative of the nobility of the country; the Baroness de Lovenich, a Grecian profile with German hair; the daughters of Madame Van Houten, and many other persons worthy of captivating Parisian eyes, if their antique style of

dress, holding to the Teutonic, had not sometimes given them the appearance of strange caricatures.

The empress was of the age to appreciate elegance more than beauty: thus was she attracted by the style of my dress much more than by the beauty of the ill-dressed guests who formed a large part of her circle. She recognized immediately the cut of the famous Madame Germond, who was the first to display to advantage her Creole figure, and knew how to unite with so much skill the nobleness of the royal costume with the grace of a *négligée* robe. She remarked more than all upon my head-dress, which, save the difference of a crown of flowers from a crown of diamonds, much resembled her own. The disposal of the circlet, the finish of the braid, all betrayed the hand of Duplan. Now, this Duplan, the great hairdresser of the age, had been in my employ; and, although he was newly elevated to the grade of first *valet de chambre* of the empress, he came to offer me his services, upon finding himself at leisure before the levee.

It was resolved in the councils of court, where each day are agitated the laws of etiquette, that it was not becoming or allowable that the first

valet de chambre of a sovereign should labor upon uncrowned heads, and Duplan received orders to dress no more heads in the city ; — a little circumstance from which arose the good fortune of Herbault.

Nothing could be more comical than the indecision and the decrees of the committee of etiquette, of which half wished to bring back the ancient usages, and the other half to adapt as much as possible the old traditions of the court to the independent manners born of the revolution. Our two first comic writers had been summoned to Aix-la-Chapelle: it seemed as if for the purpose of enriching our theatre with new “ridicules,” almost as amusing as those described by Molière.

Picard received orders to transport his company to Aix-la-Chapelle during the stay of the empress. Alexander Duval had come to pass the season with me at the waters. These recruits to our party, and associates in our gayety, can call to mind our diversion in talking over the droll scenes in this parody of the court of Versailles. The grotesque courtiers at this grotesque court furnished much gayety for our private suppers, and were a rich seasoning of the banquet. We laughed unsparingly at the super-

fluous efforts of the brave officers to submit to the traces, and to polish their brusque manners, to round off their periods till they attained the lightness, grace, or foppery of the ancient régime. Many of them, wishing to imitate what was proverbially called the gallantry of the age of Louis XIV. gave into all the mawkishness and pedantry of M. Desmazes ; and this ridiculous euphuism was so full of mythological comparisons, that the empress had much difficulty in restraining laughter.*

The department was then commanded by a young general, brave, as all were, and remarkably fine-looking, but very ignorant of the customs and usages of the old court. The first time that he came to pay his respects to the queen, he saw her seated upon a sofa ; and he seated himself by her side, as he had been accustomed to by the mayor's wife. In vain the chamberlain handed him a seat, and Madame de Larochevoucauld made a sign for him to seat him-

* "The extravagance of euphuism, or a symbolical jargon of the same class," says Sir Walter Scott, "predominates in the romances of Calprenade and Scuderi, which were read for the amusement of the fair sex in France during the long reign of Louis XIV. and were supposed to contain the only legitimate language of love and gallantry. In this reign they encountered the satire of Molière and Boileau." — *Trans.*

self; he saluted her, and budged not from the sofa. The aids were indignant at such familiarity; the empress alone had the kindness not to notice it; but this high treason against etiquette was soon announced to the emperor, and it resulted in a keen reprimand addressed to Josephine.

Now Napoleon perceived that his court was complete; for spies failed not.

M. Deschamps, secretary of the court, *ci-devant* author of very gay vaudevilles, was now elevated, or rather he had descended from the rank of a man of letters to that of a servant of the court. He was sometimes embarrassed from his ancient intimacy with actor-authors, which amused the latter on their side. They had been his coadjutors, and we might apply to Deschamps what was said of another writer: "Observe that this poet has never composed a masterpiece alone; he has always given himself a colleague; this renders the burden of his glory more light for the shoulders of envy."

As to the rest, this good M. Deschamps, polite, obliging, accomplished, was a most unhappy man in the office so ambitiously desired by him. He had too frequently made sport with his merry friends at the absurdities of the court, not to suffer shame in seeing himself involved in

them ; — he who, from his birth, his vocation to the muses, indeed from his whole past life, might more easily than others dispense from court attendance. Besides being, through his office, the natural confidant and depository of the daily debts incurred by the empress, in opposition to the commands of the emperor, the poor secretary saw himself threatened with disgrace from his mistress at the least check in her expenses, or else liable to incur the anger of his master for her extravagance ; and every one knows the terror this anger could inspire.

Uniting the functions of intendant to those of private secretary, he was obliged to abridge the ledger, to reduce the total ; but how acquit himself of the surplus remaining due ? It was necessary to cajole the creditors, purchase their silence, then write some humble observations upon the excessive sums demanded by objects of fancy ; observations that Josephine read or listened to with the more patience, as she kept no account herself, and spent not a sou the less. All this was nothing compared to other trials, — to array himself in the morning in the court dress, sword at the side ; to change so soon from the Carmagnole of the terrorists, from the Redingote of the republican, to the court parapher-

nalía of Louis XVI. a costume condemned to death by the revolutionists, that our actors scarcely dared to hazard when playing the Marquis in Molière. This called for effort, but won no glory for our poor author, as the only danger he was called to brave was mockery and ridicule.

Many distinguished people, led by chance, or for the benefit of their health, were at the springs this season; amongst them some of the principal châtelains from the banks of the Rhine. Madame de Turenne, recently arrived from her province, came unexpectedly, and glittered amongst the women presented to the empress. She was charming enough to produce a sensation; but it must be acknowledged it was, above all, to the beauty of her diamonds that she owed the marked attention of her sovereign, and that of the persons charged by the emperor to draw the most magnificent women to the court of the empress.

When it was known that this woman, with eyes as splendid as the diamonds she wore, was the wife of a very handsome man, and that they both formed a part of the imperial household, a comic joy was diffused amongst the officers, whose learning upon genealogy was not upon a par with their bravery.

One of the officers, who was the most attached to the ex-republic, said to me, "Since the old general has the fancy to mix his aristocratic name with ours, and has given us his descendant, we will not object; there is not a colonel who would not feel flattered to be the comrade of the son of Turenne. Zounds! with this name amongst us, it behooves us to fight well. This is better than all the returned dandy emigrants that we see on all sides of us, ready to commence their farces as formerly." Much pains was taken to inform him that the Maréchal de Turenne left no son, and that there were among the dandy emigrants such names as Montmorency, Mortemart, Rohan, Boufflers, Villars, Broglie, whose ancestors conquered, as the ancient Turenne; but he continued no less his diatribes against the old French nobility, making only one exception in favor of the pretended son of Maréchal Turenne.

This intrepid soldier of our republican armies was a true type of the military of his epoch; brave even to heroism, loving liberty, believing that he still fought for her, disdaining all science foreign to that of war, an adorer of Bonaparte the general, discontented with the Emperor Napoleon and groaning over his decrees, but obey-

ing them as a slave, only permitting himself to abuse them. Inflexible upon the point of duty, as to the rest humane, even generous, he had yielded submission to authority in the most cruel case in which he could be put to the trial; he had been selected to command the men who were to fire upon the Duke d'Enghien. Awakened in the middle of the night in order to repair to the fosses of Vincennes for an act of justice (it was said) upon an officer who was a traitor, and condemned by a council of war, he believed himself called upon to fulfil one of those sad duties which military discipline demands. The recital that he made me of what he experienced at this frightful moment is present to my memory to such a degree that I still hear his expressions, half grotesque, half pathetic.

"Must *I* do this bloody deed!" said he; "I who have always held in execration such fêtes! But what would you have me to do? It is in the military line, a soldier's duty, and I must resign myself to it; they would call me a baby if I was to blubber and make a fuss about shooting a deserter, or else some poor culpable devil who is pert to his commanding officer. Thus I did not open my mouth when I received the command from the general to execute the sen-

tence of the council of war: I was only astonished at the hour chosen for this expedition. Kill a man in broad daylight, — that would pass muster; but at midnight, by the light of a lantern put upon his breast; thousand thunders! is that to show oneself brave?" In speaking thus, the great face of the captain became pale from the recollection. "Then," he resumed, "this sneaking business, done in the night, has not a fair face. But go on, said I to myself; if the poor lad has committed a folly, he must pay for it. Then I disposed my men, and told them to be exact at the word of command; for there are some jolly fellows there who shoot Austrians like so many sparrows, but quail when required to take aim at a comrade.

"In a moment a little gate opened; some fusiliers came out; the sufferer stood, as was right, in the middle.

"Ah! ah! thought I, in looking at him, this is no jolly messmate. What a noble air! What a face! With what a firm step he walks! But, God forgive me! he is still young — thirty years, perhaps: he must be of good family, for the officers pay him homage. With this port, with this courage, can any one say that he deserves such a vile death?"

“My brain was confused ; I thought this young man must be the victim of some false report ; a brave officer calumniated. I could not breathe, I could not speak ; and it seemed to me that the word *fire* would never come out of my mouth. He had not, however, fallen back ; and it was not required to shoot a soldier standing in his place.

“Happily I saw him make a sign to one of our men, as if he wished to speak to him. He put a paper in his hands, and I thought he sought to gain time. Good ! thought I : he is a fellow of no pluck. Confound me ! he takes it hard, he wishes to escape. This restored my courage ; I — I — did my duty.” Here the captain paused, pale, awe-struck, as if he still heard the fatal explosion. He raised his eyes to mine, and I think my countenance must have expressed a lively indignation and terror ; for he quickly turned his head, exclaiming, “You execrate me, is it not so ? But knew I who it was ? Knew I that the council of war hurried the business, through fear that the emperor should grant him pardon ? Did I even know that the paper he put into the hands of his comrade was a lock of his hair, a last adieu to the woman he loved ? God confound me ! I believe that, if I hesitated, I never

should have had strength to give the order to draw. But Heaven knows if I do not hate all these Bourbons since the infernal machine! they have, however, a soldier's pity. But, thousand bombs! this one had the air of so brave an officer, and the noble mien of a soldier that had nothing to reproach himself with, and defied death! The look of pity, as he turned towards us, which seemed to say, 'Poor people! I pity you more than myself; for you kill a good Frenchman; and, when you learn that he is not culpable, this action will weigh upon your hearts as a crime.'

"But this is true, madame," added the captain, striking his breast, "I have a clean breast. After executing this sad warrant, I saw the comrade swoon like a woman. It was just as we met a poor young man who had been brought up in the family of the Duke of Condé, and who said to us, sobbing piteously, that we had killed an innocent man — he who lay stretched before us, pierced with our balls, so brave, so noble, was the Duke d'Enghien. Ah! I felt as if a poniard had pierced my own heart, and God knows how I swore against those who had given this order; for I warrant you it did not proceed from the head of the emperor. Zounds! it is

not thus that he proceeds with his enemies : he kills them in broad daylight, with the discharge of cannon, at the risk of being carried off himself by a ball. But this order was the vile work of some soldiers belonging to the old court, who feared the lash if the old folks came back ; these are the political renegades, who have taken upon them to shoot a Bourbon, believing they should confer a great favor upon the general. Well, they deceive themselves ; for I know through my cousin, who is in service of the *Chambre aux Tuileries*, that, in seeing Josephine enter the chamber, agitated, her eyes swimming in tears, crying out, ‘ Duke d’Enghien is dead ! ah ! my God ! what hast thou done ? ’ the emperor turned pale, and said in a smothered tone, ‘ *The wretches are too quick.* ’ I know that he remained many days plunged in deep sadness, and passed many nights without sleep. Ah ! the remembrance of those nights remains secreted in his own heart : he has never revealed the distress he experienced. This is right — the deed is done : he must sustain himself ; but I believe he will through his life detest those who counselled him, and even the poor devils like me who executed the deed without knowing what ~~they~~ did.”

The approach of M. de C*** interrupted this narration, that I trembled to hear continued before him. M. de C*** has confessed to me since, that, struck by the alteration in my countenance and that of Captain H***, he had been upon the point of withdrawing at discretion; but the embarrassment of moving off without an apparent motive withheld him.

M. de C*** was one of those emigrants newly radiated, whom pleasant recollections of Coblenz induced to fix his habitation upon the banks of the Rhine. The fear of the reign of terror was not without its weight in determining him never to quit the frontier; but what made the residence in these newly-acquired provinces particularly agreeable was the pleasure of hearing the agents of the French government abused without let or hindrance, and the being permitted to bewail in peace the departure of all the petty vexations which are so deplorable under the Germanic domination. This strain is customary in all conquered provinces, and the hatred of the vanquishers was natural for those whose revolutionary wounds still bled.

Captain d'H*** soon perceived by my embarrassment, that I feared royalist confidences as much as *republican* confessions. He cast a re-

proachful glance upon me ; for it was an injury to his honor to think that an emigrant could endanger himself before him. The captain was a man of honor in all the extent of that word. Ah, well ! the remembrance of his excellent qualities, and the service he rendered to my husband in suffering him to escape from prison in '93, could not triumph over my horror at the atrocious deed he had been compelled to see accomplished. I acknowledge, to my shame, that his misfortune and the unhappiness it caused him should have redoubled my interest in the unfortunate man ; but no, it rendered his presence insupportable to me. I always saw him before me, commanding the massacre of an innocent man — and such a man !

He said to me one day, “ I did wrong, madam, to speak to you of the affair of Vincennes ; you are like me, you think of it always.”

“ Yes, too frequently,” replied I.

“ And you would not have had me perform my duty ? ”

“ That is true ; but it is an injustice that will pass away, I hope.”

“ Never,” replied he with bitterness ; “ women are like commanders-in-chief ; you must tell them of nothing but deeds of renown and glory.”

From the date of that day I have never seen Captain d'H***: he was killed at one of our victories.

A few days before her departure from Paris, the empress had attended the fête appointed by the emperor. It was to celebrate the distribution of the decorations of the Légion d'Honneur. This ceremony was attended with great pomp in the Church of Invalids; and one might fill volumes with the epigrams, jokes, irony, and satire, which saluted the birth of this order, the honor of belonging to which has since been solicited by all the illustrious of France.

Napoleon, upon this day, seated for the first time upon the throne, received nineteen hundred chevaliers. For the first time also, the cortége of the imperial court were to pass over the place where fell the head of Louis XVI.

The vanquisher of Marengo had quitted his war-horse for his carriage of state to cross the great passage of the Tuileries; and the garden, as at this day, perfumed with flowers, filled with warriors and elegant women, resounded with cries of "Live the emperor! live the emperor!" The journals said of this fête, "Delight filled every heart! Enthusiasm was at its height!" Of all species of style, the least varied is the

which flatters power. However, the faithful to liberty foresaw *their cross*; the republicans threatened to treat the new throne as the old; those whose names or interests attached them to the royal party laughed with scorn in thus seeing ancient royal grandeur aped, and said, "Here is a *cross* which assures me of the return of *my cross of St. Louis*."

The evening of this gala day, the emperor assembled his court in the gallery of antique sculpture. Lighted by flambeaux, those masterpieces of art appeared in their ancient glory. It was thus that in each of his royal fêtes which he hazarded in defiance of the republic, he loved to testify his claim to the national gratitude.

Each department was to have a share of these decorations of the Légion d'Honneur. It was decided that the empress should distribute those for the department of Roër. The pompous ceremony of the coronation was to reappear in the cathedral where Charlemagne had been crowned.

The bishop, at the head of the clergy, received the empress at the door of the church; she passed under a canopy the long basilique, and seated herself upon a throne prepared for her within the choir.

The beauty of the ancient cathedral, the rich

and noble monument consecrated to the glorious memory of Charlemagne, enhanced the interest of the scene now being enacted. The magnificence of the new court, that of all those who were selected to take a part in the ceremonies, or who came to witness them, the splendor of the military costume, and, more than all, the return of the sacerdotal pomp, so long withdrawn from view, gave to this celebration an aspect of true grandeur.

The empress, invested for the first time in the royal mantle, wore a diadem of diamonds ; and the *ensemble* of her ornaments, the long train of her white silk dress, which displayed its rich golden embroidery as it floated over the ascent to the throne, her majestic figure, her attitude, both simple and imperial, completed the illusion. Here was indeed a sovereign ! And the numerous priests, magnificently attired in vestments ornamented with pearls, which were formerly presented by the Emperor Otho, fitly represented the holy court of a powerful empress.

The imperial insignia of Charlemagne, his crown, his sceptre, were taken from the treasury, and laid upon the altar ; they seemed to be placed at the disposal of him who dared to seize them. And it was under the arched roof of

this Gothic temple, where Charlemagne gave reception to his valiant knights, Roland, Roger, Renaud, that the knights of the Légion d'Honneur knelt before Josephine, whilst receiving from her hand the decoration of the order. During this time, the people kneeling sang in perfect unison the canticles of Mozart; and it is utterly impossible to imagine the effect of this harmony, which seems to proceed from the power of adaptation inherent in the German voice: no choir could produce the effect of this multitude singing *en masse* as with one voice, with that fervor of soul which springs from the religious sentiment of a whole people. The least devout were affected by this torrent of harmony, and their prayers mixed involuntarily with the general prayer. Thanks were rendered to the great founder of kingdoms and laws, for having founded in France the music of the church.* It was believed that the gracious God was pleased to listen to such songs to his honor.

It was in the midst of this exaltation of feeling, that General L*** took it into his head to

* The singing of the church drew the particular attention of Charlemagne. Schools were established in the cathedrals. He decided that the Gregorian chant should be preferred throughout the kingdom.

deliver a long speech adapted to the occasion ; and in which he felicitated himself, he said, in seeing Virtue upon the throne, and Beauty at her side. This singular specimen of eloquence equally offended the virtuous and the beautiful who were present ; for each made little account of beauty without virtue, and still less perhaps of virtue without beauty.

The same evening, the empress in her saloon pleasantly reverted to the noble speech made by General L***, and asked me how I liked it. The question was embarrassing ; for I would not displease either the general or the empress, and I escaped the perplexity by frankly avowing, that, distracted by the magnificence of the spectacle, and persuaded that the eloquent general would only offer her majesty agreeable truths, I had not listened.

“ This will not prevent you from a merry laugh this evening with your friends,” said the empress in a whisper. Then, seeing my astonishment, she added, “ I know through M. Deschamps that you give charming suppers, where a person can laugh, as we used to do, when Duval and Picard amused us so much in their comedies ; and that you there recount the most diverting stories. You ought to tell

me some of them; you know that nothing amuses more both the emperor and myself than these little gossips. When we attend the theatre, his eagle eye discovers in a moment the new relations formed during his absence: he knows all the ruptures, perceives the reconciliations, and is more interested than would be believed in these little dramas of society. For example: there is a certain person whose course he follows with all the perseverance one would give to an interesting novel. You divine of whom I speak, do you not?"

"I think so, madame."

"Do you see her often?"

"As frequently as possible. Your majesty knows better than any one how lovely and amiable she is."

"Ah! yes, I know it," said she, sighing; "I know how sweet is her friendship. You have been educated together, you must love her?"

"Yes, madame. In the time of her power, I owed to her the liberty, and perhaps the life, of many of my friends; thus shall I be everlastingly attached to her."

"And I shall always love her; but Bonaparte will no more permit me to see her, and that afflicts me."

Then, perceiving that our conversation was remarked, "I have a commission for you," added she; "come to see me some morning."

"I wait your orders."

"No: ask an audience of me through M. d'Harville; we shall then talk more at our leisure."

After this the conversation returned to its old tenor, which was a sort of monologue, interrupted by unimportant questions, whose only end was to speak a word to each one composing the circle. The most practised in these artifices of politeness was Madame de Sémonville: her address gained her great favor in the saloon of the empress. First of all, she had the advantage of having seen *that* of Maria Antoinette, and she knew how to ally the easy grace of conversation with the respect imposed by rank, and Josephine conversed with her in all security; she was certain that her own elevation, recent as it was, would not for a moment be forgotten by Madame de Sémonville. Besides, the homage of a woman so versed in court etiquette afforded the best model for the imitation of the young ladies of the palace, and for all in whom her court consisted, whose inexperience caused them to commit so many blunders.

In the meantime, M. de Sémonville, our ambassador in Holland, was in deep disgrace, and that very unjustly, for having obeyed some orders that the emperor in his policy wished to appear to disapprove. M. de Sémonville, strong in his innocence, remained at Aix-la-Chapelle, much more occupied with anxiety for the health of a daughter-in-law than in his own interests. He frequently visited me, to whom he confided his solicitude and sad presages; and I do him the justice to say, that no regret, no ambitious desire, shared his paternal cares. Eh, well! this sincere and touching affliction passed in the world for mortification at his ministerial disgrace. The incredulity of the great as to the reality of any pure and simple feeling does *them* injury, and I, above all, detest this manifestation; because it affords aliment for the flood of commonplaces against courtiers in which we have been steeped for so many ages.

I obtained without delay the audience, and there I indeed found *Madame Beauharnais* in all her simplicity and friendliness for her old acquaintances.

She spoke to me of the differences she frequently had with the emperor concerning *Madame de C****, and told me that he pardoned her

friend least of all for having disdained the distinguished station she might have filled after France was delivered from Robespierre.

"This should perhaps be regretted," said I; "but it is not a fault."

"Such," replied she, "Bonaparte considers it: he views it as opposing Destiny."

"I acknowledge it is right to pity, but not to hate; that is unjust."

"And even ungrateful," interrupted Josephine; "for he knows that Theresa served him with zeal and power when it was a question if he should be commander of the Italian army. I have not concealed from him the relief of all sorts tendered by this excellent friend when I came out of prison, a widow, ruined, and not knowing what would become of my children. Believe you, the reasons must be very powerful that can overcome these grateful remembrances in Bonaparte; for he is possessed of more sensibility and gratitude than is believed. I am myself a proof of that; there has been enough said against me to alienate him; there are continual efforts made by some to separate us, — which would kill me. Well! his grateful recognition of my attachment, and the duty he owes me, have outweighed the insinuations and perfidious denunciations of

his family. Perhaps I am bound to him from his superstitious feelings still more than his love : he believes me one of the rays of his star."

Then Josephine recounted to me the prediction of the sorceress at the time of her quitting Martinique. "She would lose her first husband by a violent death; the second would make her more than queen."

This oracle, of which the half was already fulfilled before she knew Bonaparte, she felt assured imparted confidence and vigor to the measures he took to elect himself Emperor of France.

"He is equally superstitious as myself," added she; "he is so persuaded that I bring him good fortune, that on no account would he depart with his army without embracing me. It is true he chides me severely whenever his accursed police inform him that I have seen Mademoiselle Lenormand; but, after abusing her as a liar, and threatening imprisonment if she continues to speculate upon our stupid credulity, he fails not to make me repeat what she has seen in her cards; and he always smiles with complacency when she has predicted new triumphs for him."

— Then the empress spoke to me of many an-

cient frequenters of Malmaison, who withdrew at the time that the changes were made which preceded that famous cabinet where so many memorable deeds were meditated.

"Ducis and Lemercier," continued Josephine, "returned to the emperor the cross of the Légion d'Honneur: he regarded this as a great insult; but what most excited his anger was the adieu of M. Lemercier, who said to him in parting, 'Ah! you please yourself in remaking the bed of the Bourbons; but I predict that you will not sleep there ten years.'* Although this prediction gave him no alarm, you can readily believe it left its sting, and the thorn still pricks. On this account I am deprived of seeing the friends I prefer to all others. You, who enjoy the pleasure of meeting them every day, and hearing their delightful conversation, tell these dear friends that I regret them in the midst of all the pomps and pleasures that surround me; but say it in a whisper, for the interest I feel in them would be construed into a crime. This is not all," added she, giving a furtive glance around, to see if no one was listening, for espionage was rife; "it is essential that you engage Theresa to

* He slept there nine years and nine months.

renounce her connection with M. O***. Bonaparte believes him one of his greatest enemies : this is the true cause, the only cause, of his animosity against her. Endeavor to obtain this sacrifice, and I am sure it will restore to her his ancient affection, and he will permit me to see her as formerly."

The commission was painful, and besides I expected no success. The woman who had braved the scaffold to save her friends could immolate no one to the hatred, or rather to the unjust prejudices, of the emperor ; I made this reflection aloud. "Of what avails it now?" answered Josephine ; "promise me that you will engage her to follow my advice. My God ! one has not always so good a motive for —"

She finished not, and her restriction made me smile. I promised to do what she asked me with so much grace, and was about taking leave of her, when she detained me to speak of her ornamental attire.

Madame de Saint-Hilaire, her first waiting-woman, was called to show me the last dress sent by Leroi. It was of tully, couleur de rose, garnished with flowers, which would have been quite suitable for a young lady of sixteen the day after the nuptials. Whilst praising the

beauty of this dress, I thought it would make the empress appear more old than she really was ; but I was altogether mistaken : it hung so gracefully, and displayed her fine figure to such advantage, that one pardoned her age for not quite countenancing the deception of fashion.

“ Who dressed your head yesterday so exquisitely ? ” said Josephine to me ; “ your turban became you admirably.” “ O Heavens ! ” exclaimed I, laughingly, “ I crave your mercy for the poor man ; ” and I confessed to her that the turban she had remarked was executed by her second valet de chambre.


“ What ! that young Herbault make such lovely things ! I must employ his talent.”

There was a fortune in that word.

Then, passing from this subject to another, “ Desire your friend Picard to vary his repertory a little more. He always has the same jokes, the same ridiculous citizens. He has talent enough to embark for the high comedy. Think you not his continual satires against the parvenus are past the mode ? ”

“ I believe that he is to give a new piece to-morrow,” replied I ; “ for people have arrived from Normandy to the court.”

“ Know you the title of the piece ? ” I was



upon the point of mentioning, when female instinct stopped me of a sudden. "It has a singular title," I said, feigning to seek to recall it; "but I cannot recollect it now."

To tell the truth, the title of this piece was *The Woman of Forty-five Years*; and, as I had a presentiment that the title would not be agreeable to the empress, I would not prejudice her against the work.

Unhappily this little comedy was not of a nature to vanquish such prejudices. I have never comprehended how Picard, with all his intelligence, could fancy the empress would be amused by the representation of a woman veering towards age, who covered her person with ornaments to conceal the inroads of time.

I was in torments during the performance. My box was near that of the empress, and I saw her face contract at every satire directed against the woman of forty-five; and I was devising means to avoid all conversation upon the subject, when M. de B***, chamberlain of the empress, came to my box, deputed by her to invite me to her soirée after the play.

I could not there escape the criticisms, or even turn aside the accusations, levelled at the poor author. It was impossible to justify, and almost

cowardly to abandon him : my part was difficult.

Scarcely had I paid my devoirs when the empress said to me with a smile somewhat caustic,

“Eh, Madame G***, how found you this new piece ? As for me, I ought not to be the judge. People should advise Picard to exhibit only before ladies of twenty-five years of age.”

“It seems to me, madame, that the audience should comprehend those who appear no more.”

This flattery was ill-turned, but it won me an affectionate smile.

The error of genius is the signal for the onset of the hounds of mediocrity ; and we must suffer them to tear their prey. Thus, the courtiers fell upon Picard with all the bitterness of narrow spirits.

In this circumstance, Picard had certainly given proof of a great want of tact. The empress planned to avenge the insult by offering to his rival an opportunity for triumph at her house. I had invited M. Deschamps to a recitation that Duval had promised us of a drama that he had written. It was called *The Domestic Tyrant*. At this time, the appearance of a drama in five acts, by the author of *Edouard en Ecosse*, was quite an event. Deschamps had

mentioned it at court, and the empress said to me,

“M. Duval has, I am told, a work in his portfolio ; I should be delighted to hear it. Has he yet read it to you ? ”

“No, madame.”

“It is of no consequence, however ; we can venture to hear him upon trust, assured that we shall run no risk, and that he will be very interesting. Ask him to read it here.”

And M. Deschamps was commissioned to invite him to submit his drama to this high court of Areopagus.

“What can I think,” cried he, “after what followed *Edouard en Ecosse* ? Will they lay a snare for me, and confiscate this work like the other ? ”

His anxiety was not unreasonable, and I knew not what to oppose to it, when M. Deschamps arrived with a message from the empress, assuring Duval that she had pleaded his cause against the emperor, and that it was a particular proof of her kind feelings that she requested this reading.

Duval could not resist the wishes of her whom he called the lovely, the good Josephine ; and, on the day appointed, I was to usher the author

into this new court, where he was to make his début with more hope of amusement from its absurdities than care for its applause.

This anticipated dramatic soirée was truly a fête for the poor men condemned to stand every day in the circle of the empress till it separated, particularly for General d'Harville, who had suffered from an illness that had considerably impaired his strength, and caused the swelling of his limbs; it required all the heroism of the courtier to conceal his agony, and uphold himself in such a posture. In reality, glory and religion do not inspire greater devotedness than the worship of etiquette from those who enter her courts. And the whip of satire is the only palm awarded for this martyrdom, at the same time merciless and comical.

Every day, a courier, despatched from Boulogne, brought Josephine news from the emperor; and in the evening she would sometimes read passages from the imperial letters, in which events were arranged for recital, not always as they happened, but as his majesty wished they should be understood.

I had proof of these striking alterations one evening, when she described to us the frightful tempest that perilled our flotilla. A gentleman

had dined with me that day, who had received a letter from a friend giving an account of the tempest, and the disaster which followed. The letter was written by an officer of the marine, who desired that the truth should be known respecting the disgrace of Admiral Bruix, who commanded our naval army.

This was the important passage : —

“ You will be told, it will be insisted on as an indubitable fact at court, that your friend, Admiral Bruix, has disgraced himself ; but this is not true ; and, were I to lose my good name and my grade, I would still repeat, This is not true.

“ A few mornings since, the emperor, on mounting his horse, announced that the naval armament should pass under review : he ordered that the ships should weigh anchor, and pass review in full sea, and all to be ready on his return from his ride.

“ The order was immediately transmitted to Admiral Bruix, who simply replied, ‘ The review cannot take place to-day. No vessel shall stir.’

“ As soon as the emperor returned, he asked if all was ready, and was told the answer of the admiral. It was twice repeated to him before he ~~would~~ believe it : he then stamped his foot, his

eyes became infuriated, and he sent orders to the admiral to repair immediately to him.

“But his impatience would not allow him to wait: he set out in pursuit, and encountered him half-way from his barrack. The staff officers who attended his majesty ranged themselves behind him, and preserved a fearful silence; for never had the emperor been seen so transported with passion.

“‘Monsieur l'Admiral,’ said he, in a voice infuriated with anger, ‘why have you not executed my orders?’

“‘Sire,’ replied the admiral, with respect but firmness, ‘a furious storm is threatening. Your majesty can see it as well as I can: will you, then, expose the lives of so many brave men?’

“‘Monsieur,’ broke forth the emperor, more and more angry, ‘I have given the orders, why have you not executed them? The consequences concern me alone: do you obey!’

“‘Sire, I shall not obey!’

“‘Monsieur, you are insolent.’ Saying which, the emperor, who held his horsewhip uplifted in his hand, moved towards the old admiral, who stepped back one step, seized his sword, and said, becoming pale, ‘Sire, take care!’

“All the witnesses shuddered with fear. T¹

emperor, immovable, his hand upraised, fixed his eyes upon the admiral, who, on his side, preserved his menacing attitude. At length the emperor threw his whip down; then M. Bruix relaxed his grasp of his sword, and, with head uncovered, awaited in silence the result of this scene. 'Monsieur Rear-Admiral Magon, you will execute this instant the orders that I have given. You, monsieur,' addressing himself to Bruix, quit Boulogne within twenty-four hours, and withdraw to Holland.' The emperor then turned away to see that his orders were executed by the rear-admiral; but scarcely was the disposition of the fleet made, according to the orders of the emperor, than the heavens were overspread with appalling clouds, the thunder roared, the tempest howled, and the ocean-surge dashed the broad sides of the line. In fine, what the admiral predicted had arrived. A frightful hurricane dispersed the ships, and threatened to engulf them. The emperor, with a dejected air, his eyes cast down, arms crossed, with a quick step paced along the shore, when suddenly horrible shrieks were heard, — more than twenty gun-boats were swallowed up by the waves; the poor wretches who manned them struggled against the billows, crying for help. But this

help, the danger was so great, no person dared to offer. With rage in my heart, and curses on my tongue, against him whose obstinacy caused this destruction, I suddenly perceived the object of my anger escape from the arms which would have detained him, and leap into the safety-boat. 'Let me alone! let me alone! they must be saved!' Directly his bark was filled with water; the billows passed over his head; one wave more strong overset the emperor's boat near the shore, where he stranded; but his hat floated upon the waters. Electrified by so much courage, officers, soldiers, citizens, mariners, threw themselves into boats, or plunged into the waves, to save the drowning; but a very small number were recovered, and the next morning the waves washed upon the shore more than two hundred corpses, with the hat of the vanquisher of Marengo.*

"The next day was a day of distress for all the camp: each one recognized a friend in the piles of bodies floating to the shore. The emperor seemed dejected at this spectacle, and I

* This account is found in many memoirs of that epoch, particularly in those of Constant. He mentions a drummer who was one of the crew in a wrecked boat, and who was seen floating to the shore seated upon his drum as a raft. The poor wretch had his thigh broken. He remained more than twelve hours in "horrible position."

thought he inwardly regretted his injustice towards the admiral; but it is nevertheless true that Bruix is reproached here for having incited the emperor to this rash act by his laconic replies, when more complaisance might have made him retract. But I do not believe this. Whether the admiral could or could not have recovered the favor of the emperor, he was not culpable: he did his duty."

I was still affected by this recital, which I had heard two hours before, when the empress, still holding the letter she had received from the emperor in her hand, told us that the imprudence of Admiral Bruix came near sinking the flotilla, but happily it had braved the tempest; and that nothing could equal the joy of the soldiers and sailors, who had already disputed upon who should first step upon the shores of England. Towards the conclusion of his letter, the emperor accused himself of laughing heartily, some days before, at seeing the minister of the marine fall into the water. In passing from the quay to the gun-boat, a simple plank had been laid across for the emperor, who leaped lightly over; but M. de Crest, very bulky and not very nimble, after placing timidly one foot upon the plank, which shook under his weight, lost his equili-

brium before he had passed half over ; the plank broke, and the minister fell into the water between the quay and the boat. Some of the sailors immediately jumped into the water, in order to assist the poor man ; they took great pains to hoist him into the boat, where the emperor, as he accuses himself, welcomed him with shouts of laughter ; little charitable, we must say.

This anecdote alone furnished a *répast* for the assembly the whole evening ; happy in being able to laugh with impunity over a merry story which had diverted the emperor himself.

The time appointed for Duval's rehearsal being arrived, I accompanied the poet to the empress's saloon, which we found filled. Besides the court, there were many there who had repaired to Aix-la-Chapelle for the waters, and some distinguished strangers who were thought worthy to be invited to this literary fête. Duval received a most gracious welcome from the empress : this did not insure him an equally warm reception from all the audience ; for each one knew that his character, being truly Breton, and his independent genius had sometimes displeased the emperor. It was necessary, therefore, to keep the balance even between the kindness of the empress, and the cold reserve that al'

good courtiers should manifest towards him who had once displeased the master, and might again. The drama labored under more than one obstruction of equal importance: it was the first time that so large an assembly had met in the empress's saloon, and the order of places was not yet arranged. Those of the lady of honor, and the ladies of the palace, were naturally near the sovereign; but, as she saw them every day, she preferred seeking for more novelty amongst the guests, — a preference which sometimes brought a reproach upon her from those who had but small title to her favor. This freedom tormented Madame de la Rochefaucauld, the great priestess of etiquette; she consented that Madame de Sémonville, whose rank, talents, and manners offered all the requisite conditions, should be honored with the preference of the empress; but, if any less distinguished personage was permitted to approach, her little soul was in a flutter of indignation. In this new circle, disposed with the hesitation of inexperience, no one was contented with the place assigned, excepting myself, who had no right to any; I found myself so near to the empress that she could communicate her remarks to me upon the work, without being overheard by the crowd.

The preoccupation of the auditory was gain to the author; I saw him so absorbed with the comedy enacted before his eyes, as to be upon the point of forgetting the part he was to play in this pompous assembly. The whimsical rivalries of ambition, the petty torments inflicted, and the grotesque positions assumed towards each other, furnished an ever-varying drama. He knew well that the egoism of his hearers would engross them so entirely in their own parts as to exclude all interest in the personages he was to bring before them, so he would read for himself his own comedy. A sign from the empress reminded him of the part he was expected to perform, and he proceeded to the table prepared for the reader: another sign to M. d'Harville, and he invited gentlemen and ladies to be seated. There was profound silence; but, if silence prevailed, no person yet listened, and the first act glided like a clear brook upon level ground.

The title of *Tyrant*, though joined to the adjective domestic, had at first awakened some suspicion, and it was feared the piece might awaken the republican spirit; but we soon assured ourselves upon that point, knowing that M. Duval had too much sense, and that I was

not enough of a fool, to hazard offending in the imperial saloon ; which would have been withal a dangerous experiment.

At the end of the first act, when Charles says to his sister, " Ah ! my new life appears to me rich in charms ; I was born, I believe, for the trade of arms. To-day I shall purchase a horse, and such a horse ! so fleet, so handsome ! I shall be a superb fellow, provided my uniform has a good fit ; " —

" Just so spoke Eugene before setting forth for Italy," exclaimed the empress ; " the joy of a young officer in his first uniform cannot be better described."

Each one repeated with confidence this eulogium in the same terms.

At the second act, all the agitations upon points of etiquette being subsided, more attention was paid to the piece ; besides, it was necessary to appear occupied with that which seemed to interest the empress in such a high degree.

" Ah ! my God ! " said she to me in a whisper, after a tirade of Valmont, " that was exactly the way with my first husband ; only he was still more amiable before the world." The author certainly had not foreseen his success with the empress from these passages. However, all the dra-

matic effect of the work was in a moment disconcerted by a comical but an unexpected incident.

M. Creté, the superintendent of the roads, had arrived that morning, after passing several nights upon the way, and was nearly an hour in extricating himself from the abyss in which man, horse, and carriage had been plunged ; but, braving the consequences of his fall and sleepless nights, he hastened to report himself to the empress, who had invited his attendance.

By the most traitorous chance, he slipped into a charming easy chair, in which his huge bruised members found themselves so much at their ease, that all the fascinating illusions of the sweetest sleep soon circled in his brain. The empress, as well as myself, soon saw him sinking, sinking into downy slumbers, after the weight of his fatigue ; but, as he was seated behind the author, she thought she would not disturb his innocent repose.

When the third act was finished, and many voices joined that of the empress in complimenting M. Duval, the sound awakened the director. He saw the audience all standing ; for the empress rose to speak to the poet ; and, confused at being the only person seated, he started in agitation ; but the beautiful white cygnets, sculp-

tured by Jacob, which supported the arms of the chair, pinioned his limbs during his slumber, and they became so intertwined that no efforts could part them. Armed with this panoply, he rose to unite his plaudits with those that overwhelmed the author.

No gravity could withstand the comic effect of such a scene. In vain the empress determined not to perceive the dilemma of the future minister, and his exertions to extricate himself from these cygnets: they clung to him like a solicitor. He rose, and his chair rose with him, its legs in the air, menacing all in the vicinity. The restrained merriment now burst forth; and, not knowing on what object to fix for its cause, the burden of ridicule was borne by the good husband in the play of Duval, the opposite of the *Domestic Tyrant*; and certainly never did comic personage excite more gayety.

At length, the cygnets quitted their prey, and nothing more disturbed the attention which the piece merited.

In the most selfish there remains some sensibility to domestic ties; and the idea of being abandoned by his family is, after their ruin, the only event which can affect the egoist. Thus the last acts of this drama produced much effect.

The empress was visibly affected by the sufferings of Madame de Valmont, the tears of the children, the repentance of the Tyrant ; and each one predicted for the author the success he has since obtained.

The conversation for a moment returned to the ease and familiarity of the Malmaison saloon : the painting of domestic affliction loosened the tongues fettered by court restraints, and the feelings found free utterance.

I have always pitied kings for the bonds they impose upon themselves of never conversing ; for one cannot call that conversation which is a monologue intermingled with questions, which is the sum of all royal intercourse. The most intelligent, as Frederic II. have endeavored to enjoy their share of this pleasure, the greatest and most durable offered to man ; but, familiarity and freedom being indispensable to this charming relaxation, kings are condemned to see only a poor parody upon society. Voltaire himself informs us, that, notwithstanding the encouragements and flatteries of Frederic, at the time when the suppers at Potsdam were the most animated, when the guests were the most excited, the thought that this man whom they amused could at any time consign them to a dungeon, if

such was his good pleasure, never quitted them, and considerably cooled the gayety of the encyclopedical guests.

At this day, it is not fear of the dungeon which has generated our *semi-royal* conversation ; for it must be agreed, that there never was more freedom, above all in France ; * but the love of money and place paralyzes the soul more than the terror of absolute power. As sovereigns ordinarily converse only with those who approach very near, the fear of losing the places they possess, or hope to gain, levels their conversation to the servile nullity which is the classic of courts.

A prince-royal, whose father possesses good health, if he has intelligence, can taste the charm of free converse and interchange of thought. Each one wishes to impart his light to the heir-apparent, who should see people as they are, that he may make them what they should be : here is a field of hope where one should plant generous ideas. We flatter ourselves, that, in accustoming him to the pleasures of refined and intelligent conversation, he will be disgusted with gross flattery and the idle gossip of mediocrity ; thus we form in advance a court of

* This was written in the year 1837.

superior men, suitable to guide him in the choice of ministers, to defend him in perils, and to celebrate his achievements.

By a contrary course assumed to prove the fervor of our zeal, we should be like that minister who brutalized the emperor by addressing him in such terms: he said, striking his hand upon the council-table, as if carried beyond himself, "Sire, it is right you should hear the truth; it is time you should know you are the greatest man in the world." We fear not to discover to a young prince a difference of opinion: we can even discuss a point pleasantly, and in a manner peculiarly French; through gayety reach reason: he can thus be instructed in human nature, and learn to detect the false and evil in man.

But let him hasten to enjoy this free intercourse, whilst he is still permitted to see men as they are; for the bandage appertains to the crown: the one will no sooner surmount the head, than the other will cover the eyes. But, if he has profited by his royal noviciate, there will remain to him at least the eyes of memory, which will suffice to lead him along, and sustain him from falling.

A report of the sudden arrival of the emperor spread itself inopportunately. All Aix-la-Cha-

pelle was in commotion. Each one looked back upon what he had said or done that would draw on him a reprimand, or should secure a reward. Already the arrival of many great personages, who always preceded or accompanied the emperor, left no more doubt of his approaching entrée.

The escort was military : Maréchal Mortier, I think, was in the van ; General Mouton followed him : they both commanded the admiration of the German people, from their magnificent military costume and their noble bearing. The staff-officers dazzled ; but the emperor appeared less distinguished in the eyes of this people, because they had figured him to themselves as resembling Charlemagne, both physically and morally, according to the ideas of the erudite, who instituted a comparison between the two, which they obstinately adhered to.

Some ancient relations which had subsisted between M. Maret, secretary of the consul, and my husband, and the new obligations devolving upon the latter as chamberlain of the department of the Roër, gave us a claim to the honor of receiving him as our guest during his stay at Aix-la-Chapelle.

I shall never forget the graceful kindness with

which he accepted our invitation, nor the charming moments he had the goodness to devote to us, notwithstanding the multiplied duties which claimed his attention.

The emperor, appreciating the perspicuity and lucid arrangement of his style, his facility in drawing up the reports, his quick apprehension in receiving his idea, would suffer no one else to transmit statements or intelligence from him: it might be for the *Moniteur*, or it might be political correspondence. Certain of his judgment and prudence, he consulted him upon all his plans, certain of the immediate execution of all the projects he had resolved upon. When we think of all that took place in one day by the will of Napoleon, we are astonished to find united in the same person the genius to comprehend the designs of the emperor, or the talent and time to prepare the reports for the public ear.

Four secretaries scarcely sufficed to copy the notes written by the hand of the minister; and he attended all the court circles, festivities, and theatrical amusements. Towards two in the morning, after he had toiled three or four hours, if he heard voices in my saloon, we could see him half open the door of his cabinet between

us ; and he would say, if it was not too late, he would come in and talk with us.

He surprised me, then, in the midst of what he called my staff-officers. I was surrounded by a circle which consisted of some wits, some who were very agreeable in conversation, also artists ; *my staff* had just attained their majority ; they were *maréchals* in embryo, already distinguished by many feats of arms, with promise of the glory that has since accrued to them.

We were now engaged in other games than those of war. The manner of playing was peculiar to that time. Gold, which to-day rules the world, had been in France the motive for a sanguinary revolt against those who possessed it : the guillotine had discredited gold. War, which brought much into the country, sometimes without giving time to enjoy it, inspired no disposition to hoard ; one also risked it with a disinterestedness, a nobleness, that at the present day would be regarded as madness. But how charming was this folly ! how different from the cold-blooded hypocrisy or the ill-humored sincerity of our youthful players at this time ! *Then* play was a pleasure, a passion, not an affair of business.

We laughed in playing, or interrupted the game by the smallest amusing anecdote : witness

that related by Picard, the same evening, of a hoax put upon his chief actor, which plunged him (who was the manager) into a comical embarrassment. The distinguished actor Clozel, as every one knows, was remarkable for beauty and gallantry. Having been cordially received by the mistress of the house where he took up his abode at Aix-la-Chapelle, he was won over to the fair dame, and did not notice the jealousy experienced by a friend of that lady. An appointment for the next morning for the woods of Aix-la-Chapelle completed the torment of the poor jealous man, and he determined to have his revenge. The means chosen were novel, it is true, but effectual. Reproaches, he knew, would be useless; threats would lay the burden of ridicule upon his own shoulders; the duel would be a compromise: he preferred having recourse to pharmacy.

An emetic, prescribed by his physician for a feigned sickness, sufficed for his vengeance.

In his quality of friend of the house, it was he who made the tea and distributed the cups at the different card-tables with which saloons in the province were generally amply furnished.

Scarcely had Clozel swallowed the tea offered him with so much politeness by his rival, than,

feeling himself too ill at ease to continue his game, he yielded his hand to another, which excited smothered mirth in some who were confidants of the plot. Two hours after, a servant came with a message from Clozel to the mistress of the house, saying that he should not be able to take the promised walk the next morning, as he was exceedingly ill.

Hearing this, Picard rose in alarm to go to his young actor. The jesters, willing to calm his agitation, revealed to him the cause of the temporary illness of the beautiful Clozel, without even requesting secrecy, so much did these gentlemen expect to be amused at the angry explosions of the poor Clozel. Picard was vexed and amused at the same time; for his own early recollections rendered him too indulgent for the quizzes played off upon the presumptuous.

In the meantime, although it was midnight, he went to Clozel, and found him exhausted from the operation of the medicine; as to the rest, very well, but in a state of despair which he could not relieve. In vain, Picard gave to this indisposition the most probable causes, not daring to tell the truth: Clozel obstinately believed himself at the point of death. He positively refused to play that night, though it was

the only representation which the emperor could attend. What was to be done? Picard, returning to us, gave vent to his despair, and became angry at our merriment.

I advised him to confide the story to Deschamps, who would speak of it to the empress; she would not fail to relate it to the emperor for his amusement. "All sovereigns resemble each other," added I: "when the pit or the emperor *has laughed, the sovereign is disarmed.*"

In truth, all passed off very well. M. de Rémusat sent to inquire what detained Clozel. Picard feigned that the messenger came from the emperor; proud of so high a proof of interest, the actor determined to play, dead or alive; and, though believing himself in the last agonies, Clozel performed to a wonder: the part of Riffard was never better played, or created more mirth.

Thus had I passed the evening in social merriment; although, on the contrary, had I watched in weariness, and waited in exhaustion, I should have been richly compensated by a moment's interview with M. Maret; for, independently of the interest attached to each word of one who had passed his life in intimacy with Napoleon, the conversation of the secretary was at the same

time that of a man of the world, and a man of letters. He had always some little facts relative to the emperor to relate, which showed him as one likes to see superior people, in the citizen simplicity of their existence. He described to us, this evening, how the Italian army laughed to see the commander-in-chief with his little hat grazed and defaced, covered with the dust of so many battles, and the assessments they laid upon each other to purchase their general a new one ; this homage flattered and amused him. He spoke also of the inconceivably droll letters that the emperor daily received from many of his soldiers, in which they confided to him, as to a father, their private affairs. One amongst them said, " Your majesty is too acute, and knows my uncle Eustace too well, to believe that he will ever give me a sou of the property of my mother, unless I go into the country and he sees the deed in black and white. This is why it is necessary for me to ask a furlough." Another related to him, with the same confiding simplicity, his disappointments in love. In these disclosures of the heart there was something of the primitive simplicity of the heroes in Homer towards their chief. It was proof that he was supposed by them, like Providence, to penetrate into the

cabins of the poor as the palaces of kings ; that he regarded the tears of the humble as the afflictions of the great, and knew their most secret thoughts. Nothing could give a more perfect idea of the true glory of the emperor than these examples of the worship of his men, who prayed for benefits in the confidence of hope.

M. Maret said to us, that, when a happy chance left the emperor a moment of repose to read these letters, it was rare that the reply was not favorable. We hope that so many interesting details, so many secrets of private or political life, still present to the memory of the Duke de Bassano, will not be lost to posterity ; and that he will leave us a faithful picture of the great and little events of which he has been the confidant, actor, or witness. After giving audience to all the authorities of the department, and to the ambassadors who had not been accredited since he had become emperor, Napoleon, attended by the court and some persons of the city, visited the Cathedral of Aix-la-Chapelle. He went to do homage to the holy relics presented to Charlemagne by the Empress Irene.

These relics, which are shown to the people once in seven years, consist of a chemise of the Virgin Mary, the swaddling-band of the infant

Jesus, some bones of St. Stephen, an arm of St. Charlemagne, &c.

This arm particularly attracted the attention of the emperor. He called Dr. Corvisart, who was in his suite, to ask him to what part of the formidable arm belonged that great bone preserved in a glass case for so many years.

At this question Corvisart smiled, and was silent; but, interrupted again, he replied in a low voice that this bone was a tibia; that it had, perhaps, belonged to the leg of Charlemagne, but had never been part of any arm.

“Heigh! is it so? keep this discovery to yourself,” said the emperor; “the nation must have respect for all these prestiges.”

The anatomical remark of the doctor was overheard by those near, who have repeated it to me.

The door of the iron treasury, which contains these relics, is walled; but the rampart is demolished within the interval of seven years in favor of crowned heads. This was doubly flattering to Bonaparte, both to his personal power, and as acknowledging the validity of his new title.

Amongst these relics was a little silver chest, which excited the curiosity of the empress. The bishop informed her that there was an ancient tra-

dition, which said that great good fortune would attend the person who had the skill to open this chest, but that no one had hitherto achieved it. There was no lock or hinge visible.

The empress took the little chest in her hand; and it immediately flew open; but, in achieving this miracle, she assumed nothing, as if she did it by her own power: she paid reverence *due* to the guardian priests of these relics, and not any to her own predestined glory. The emperor smiled at this sacerdotal flattery, like a man who has decided to welcome all aids, without appreciating them at more than their worth.

He showed himself less indulgent to the worship of an antique cameo kept in one of the shrines of the treasury. This cameo, justly exciting the admiration of Josephine, the clergyman of Aix-la-Chapelle, in courtesy, offered it to her; but the emperor forbade her accepting it; an imperial dictatum not highly approved by Josephine.

On quitting the sacred treasury, the emperor descended to the tomb of Charlemagne. He seated himself upon the rough stone chair upon which the emperors of Germany were crowned at Aix-la-Chapelle.

The chronicles say, that this chair was drawn

up from the tomb of Charlemagne, by the order of Otho III. When the imperial tomb was opened, the body of the greatest of our kings was found attired, partly in the habiliments of a Christian penitent, partly in those of an emperor and king of France. Otho took away those that time and humidity had respected, then the crown and scymitar. The corpse of the emperor-king was still seated upon the same chair in which he was crowned; it seemed that his pride would not suffer him to bend in death; and that repose, the bed of sepulture, was not made for him. Otho struck the last blow to this posthumous pride, in despoiling the remains of Charlemagne of the vestments and symbols of the conqueror and saint, and then deposited the body in a coffin, where it has been for more than a thousand years the object of veneration for heroes, legislators, and all who were ambitious of glory.

The events which have since transpired will lead one to form an idea of the emotions that must have agitated Napoleon when seated upon that chair, near to all that remained of him who had reigned by his arms and his laws over half the world:

Pale, his eyes glowing with ardor for glory, it might have been said that Napoleon read his

destiny over the funereal wrecks of this Colossus of power ; and I have never doubted that the impression of this moment had much influence upon the remainder of his glorious life.

Hitherto he had risen by chance, without disquieting himself concerning the rank he should hold amongst sovereigns, provided he was the most powerful ; but from this moment visions of glory and empire over the world floated in his brain : in Charlemagne he found his aim and end ; but the torrent of glory which carried him along swallowed him in mid-career.

The survey of the rest of the palace of Charlemagne added nothing to the impression inspired by his tomb. The emperor was only diverted from his reverie by the remark of one of the erudite of his suite, who recalled to his mind the Latin inscription upon the door of this palace before it was sacked by the Normans.

This inscription stated that Charlemagne had made Aix-la-Chapelle the seat of the empire of the West.

“ And the empire of the West — might it not revive in me ? ”

All concurred to encourage his gigantic projects. Bonaparte's accession to the throne was recognized by many powers in Europe, and am-

bassadors were sent from Austria, Portugal, and other kingdoms.

Thus this saloon of the empress, this half-formed court, which seemed to say, "I'll do my best, I will try to be aristocratic," — this court, which had been the object of so much mockery and ridicule, had suddenly become imposing. The military equipments and decorations were dazzling. The staff, consisting of great generals in their splendid military attire, gave *éclat* to the scene, and replaced with advantage the troop of fine gentlemen in embroidered habits of the ancient régime; also the show of ambassadors from the various courts of Europe, who, like their masters, knelt at the feet of the conqueror of Marengo, added much effect. Indeed, the prestige attached to a power that had died with Louis XIV. and was now resuscitated by glory so resplendent, made all jesting appear irrelevant.

Besides, each charm, prejudice, and even defect of the ancient régime, had its representative at this court. All varieties of character were here brought into full play by M. de Talleyrand; intellect, gayety, wit, recklessness, grace, mirth, gallantry, coquetry, all stood in full relief. The young Auguste de Colbert, so beautiful, so bril-

liant, so coolly courageous, with such wild spirits, represented the chivalrous bravery of the colonels de Fontenoy; Madame de Rochefoucauld seemed a preserved duchess. Her seat bore the false air of a tabouret, which left nothing for a duchess to desire who was an amateur of the privileges of the old court. M. d'Aubusson de la Feuillade, in his habit of chamberlain, exhibited the true *gentilhomme de la chambre*. The Chevalier d'Arville recalled to mind that lord who bathed himself with a blue cord attached to his neck, for which he had an iron case, that he might not detach himself a moment from his insignia of honor.

The ladies, it is true, for the most part young, beautiful, and richly attired, were more precise and demure than those who formerly joined in the amusements of the queen. It might be that at the court of Louis XIV. and even Louis XV. the ladies expected to be accosted with a gracious word from the sovereign, whilst at that of Napoleon they often meditated how they should evade a severe one. He ought to be pardoned for these marks of ill humor; for he almost always had a motive. For example, the English then did us all the injury in their power, and the emperor could not retaliate except by check.

ing their commerce. Well! in despite of his laws, of his will, so strong, and of the national interest, he witnessed, at every morning walk, the ladies of the palace, and even the empress herself, dressed in the English manufactures which he had proscribed his people from importing. The more danger there was in contraband traffic, the more were the ladies infected with the fashion of wearing English cloths; so much does the spirit of opposition in France outweigh all sentiments of patriotism. We thoughtlessly ruin our own manufactures that our enemies may enrich themselves by theirs. The emperor, indignant at this culpable recklessness, was not severe enough in his reproaches, since they were resisted.

Alas! it must be believed we are incorrigible, since the greatest genius of the age, he who has subdued so many powers, reformed so many abuses, has not been able to triumph over this *patricidal frivolity*.

Historical associations with Charlemagne being the great object that led to this tour of the emperor to Aix-la-Chapelle, he ascended Louisberg, where formerly climbed in pilgrimage, with naked feet and head uncovered, the same sovereign who could adorn himself with so many

rich crowns. Bonaparte, who hasted on to the Castle of Franckenberg, near to that lake where was thrown the ring of Charlemagne, had descended the mountain at a gallop; and his best equerries could scarcely follow him in the narrow footpath, craggy and steep, which has since been deserted, and given place to charming alleys. Arrived at the foot of the Gothic tower, from whence descended Emma and Eginhard, near to that bridge where Charlemagne traced only the footsteps of a woman upon the snow, the emperor encountered Josephine in the midst of her court. There, under the walls of his castle, where Charlemagne surveyed from his window the country around,—there, where he relaxed from the fatigues of glory and power, and gave himself up to the pleasure of the moment,—there, suddenly, as if by enchantment, we saw the most beautiful decorations for the opera that the genius of the *Ciceri* could devise, and that were inspired from the most brilliant recollections of our history.

The emperor on his horse, in defiance of all obstacle, mounted the broken steps to the summit of the rock on which were the ruins of the Tower of Franckenberg; over the top of this tower, an old oak, sprung amidst the ruins,

spreads its paternal arms, druidical symbol, which seem to protect it at this day, as the wings of the imperial eagle formerly protected the noble castle; the generals, aides-de-camp, officers of the guard, gradually dispersed over the bridge, the ramparts, and the ancient fort, now in ruins; Rouston le Mameluke alighted from his Arabian courser, and then, with bridle passed around his arm, his head inclined towards his master, and his eyes intently fixed upon him, awaited the termination of his deep meditation, that he might obey at the slightest signal; whilst Napoleon, surveying from the height of this ruin the smiling country selected for the pleasures of Charlemagne, brushed aside with his beautiful hand the garlands of ivy which attached themselves to the battlements as their natural crown, turning his head from time to time towards the lake whose waters received the enchanted ring, talisman of love and folly, then glancing upon the meadow, covered with ladies and flowers. This picture united the poetry of Gothic and modern history, and one was tempted to believe that the empress had this day transported her saloon to the shades of this imperial ruin; for there were seen, as formerly, valiant soldiers, preux chevaliers, and beautiful women, surrounding the great conqueror of Europe.

THE SALOON

OF

BARON GERARD.

NEVER had superiority as an artist advanced a man to a more honorable position in society than that held by Baron Gerard, — a position attained without exertion, and held as it seemed by nature's right; for, if in all time celebrated artists have been *recherché*, the magnates of society have been content with drawing them to their own saloons, without thought of honoring theirs in return. Gerard was the first artist at whose house the nobility of all nations, men and women illustrious in science, learning, or art, desired to be admitted. At first, curiosity, the wish to see his masterpieces, induced the lovers of art to solicit admittance to his atelier; but, when his occupations permitted him to converse with his guests, their attention was attracted

from the works to the man ; his eloquence and his art seemed rivals and disputed their suffrages. Coming to admire the great painter, they returned delighted and impressed with the agreeable and interesting man.

There was a genial atmosphere around him. On entering his dwelling, you felt that refinement and chaste beauty pervaded this domicile, which equally evinced the simplicity of the private man, as the nobility of the Prince of the arts ; a title awarded him in derision by his enemies, without foreseeing that posterity would honor and guard it sacredly.

His luxury was all bestowed on his atelier, to which he dedicated the half of his house ; visitors were there announced, received, and seated as in an elegant saloon. The beauty or grandeur of the subjects selected for his pictures harmonized with that of the personages painted by him, and the simple elegance of the walls which they adorned.

None but a man whose life was in his art could have disposed his paintings so exquisitely. Here was a picture replete with the sports of fancy ; there, another which awakened the feelings of sublimity or pathos ; and the adaptation of each to each was so perfect that it was

like the perception of exquisite harmony to the musical soul.

But, alas ! closed is that saloon which was open for forty years to cotemporary genius of every description ! that model of artistic hospitality, that asylum where youthful talents found protection, encouragement, examples ; where conversation was still in being, and her exquisite charms were offered to all who sought her in this retreat ! Here, every Wednesday, were to be met all the celebrated characters of the empire and the restoration who still remained to us, by the side of the young disciples of the modern schools. This might be called the reünion of the past and present ; for side by side were the works of our youthful artists, and the living portraits of the great deceased. In the saloon, David, painted by himself, occupied the place of master in the house of his pupil. This portrait, given by the painter to Gerard, was the first homage rendered to the youthful artist. Thus, the chief of our French school, after eliciting and directing the talent of Gerard, foresaw to what glory he would attain, and saluted him in advance.

Ducis still seemed to encourage by his benign and beautiful smile his happy followers in the career that he had opened for them. Ducis has

been reproached for the concessions, even the alterations, without which he could not have transplanted upon our stage *Hamlet* and *Othello*; the two parts which have formed our greatest tragic actor. During the transition from the lofty Grecian form of our French theatre to the manly beauties of Shakspeare, rules and regulations were indispensable to support the proprieties of our stage.

All the admirers of Talma were attracted by his portrait, in which was depicted that acute discernment, nice observation, and wild melancholy, without which he never could have attained to the summit of his art.

We could have imagined Madame Pasta still present, in the act of applauding the melodious strains of the beautiful Julia Grisi. If voice, talent, beauty, could give consolation for our great musical loss, and replace that fervor of genius and warmth of soul which electrified the admirers of Desdemona Malibran, at the same time that they consumed her life, Julia Grisi was the being to give it.

Mademoiselle Mars, painted by Gerard, in all the *éclat* of her beauty, there enjoyed a double triumph; that of being always admired by the ancient friends of the house, and also recognized

as a faithful representation by the young people newly admitted.

Canova there demonstrated to our young sculptors the possibility of attaining to the purity and grace of the antique.

The Baron de Humboldt was amongst us ; proof of our esteem for science, and our urbanity towards the intelligent stranger.

The emperor, represented in the period of his glory, before that of his power, reigned in this saloon, surrounded by all the geniuses he had protected, all the men of science he had fostered. Thus poets, learned men, sculptors, painters, actors, dramatists, each and all, even to the old soldier, appeared to live by the side of their idol.

If, missing their portraits, we saw in this saloon some paintings from all the great artists of the day, here was deposed the tribute that true genius of the present age always hastens to offer to the past ; for consciousness of merit preserves the truly deserving from that miserable ingratitude of insulting genius, dying or dead, in order to conceal the aid they have derived from its lessons, or their own inability to profit by them.

The effect of this beautiful atelier upon Prince Pückler, when I introduced him there two years since, is still fresh in my remembrance. The

painting of the *Battle of Austerlitz* then occupied the place of honor. On one side was that of *Daphnis and Chloe*, on the other the *Plague of Marseilles*, which Gerard had just finished; three compositions so different, but each of great power.

Near to these large paintings was placed the portrait of Maréchal Soult, who seemed still to command an army: no soldier could have passed him without carrying his hand to his schako.

During the ecstasy of the intelligent stranger over this resemblance, and whilst he was complimenting Gerard upon his European reputation, I was holding communion with my beloved poet, M. de Lamartine. I saw his kindling smile: his eyes beamed, as if he was confiding to me a beautiful thought, heaven-descended, with angel symphony. I beheld him there, as he looked, when, at the corner of my fireplace, he uttered his lamentations for a mother, to a mother who comprehended them all. There was his simple attitude, his noble countenance, his affectionate grace; I was under the charm of his presence; my eyes transfixed upon this beautiful picture, I admired the transfusion of the living genius of the poet upon the canvas of the painter, and was proud to be the friend of each.

The atelier where I first saw Gerard, shortly

after the reign of terror, was far from the magnificence that I have now described. The government then, in recompense for the prodigious success of his *Belisarius*, granted him a shelter rather than an apartment in the granaries of the Louvre. It was necessary to mount so high, traverse so many obscure passages, that Madame Cabarus* and I lost ourselves in one where we saw many little doors just alike. The servant of Madame Cabarus knocked at the first door: there issued forth a little old man in short morning robe, palette in hand, true copy of the grotesque figure and dress of Dugazon in the part of M. Fougère. He pointed us to the door of Gerard, and we passed immediately from the king's granaries of the old palace into a little room with furniture and drapery *à l'antique*, where the eye first lighted upon *L'Amour et Psyché*, and was then attracted by many female portraits of surpassing loveliness, whose Grecian contour and style added so much to the illusion that (classical foppery aside) I could have believed myself in the atelier of Apelles.

A young woman of somewhat diminutive stature, with large black eyes, and teeth of dazzling whiteness, informed us that Gerard had not re-

* Since, Madame la Princesse Chimay.

turned from La Malmaison, where the first consul was granting him the last sitting for his portrait, which would be exhibited at the next saloon. Madame Gerard engaged us to wait the return of her husband ; for it was she who met us, and whose cordial politeness was already remarked by some, before it was appreciated by all the guests at the saloon.

She quitted us to rejoin the persons she had left at home. In turning to part with her, I perceived near the window a young lady, who was copying a head as a study. From the simplicity of the muslin robe and little straw hat she wore, with her English contour, I took her for a modest pupil of Gerard, and drew near with the intention of complimenting her upon the perfection of the copy ; but, on a more attentive survey, I was convinced that she was a lady who moved in the highest circles, and that my eulogiums would appear to her impertinent.

In the meantime, notwithstanding all there was to interest me in this little atelier, I could not withdraw my eyes from her enchanting figure, and I called the attention of Madame de Cabarus to the same ; she immediately recognized the daughter of M. de L*** B***, who

was married to the Count de N***, since Duke de M***. This charming young person sought to console herself, by the study of the arts, for the horrible death of her father, whose justly acquired reputation, as the richest, the bravest, the most generous financier of France, was a certain pathway to the scaffold under the reign of Robespierre.

If I had been born envious, I should have suffered martyrdom in hearing Madame de N*** unceasingly praised for superiority in all that I attempted. Many of her friends were also mine; but, notwithstanding their indulgence for me, they never failed to say to me, "Ah! hear Madame de N*** converse, or listen to her music: you must see her dance, or mount a horse. Her paintings, her drawings, are so superior to those of all the amateurs!" In fine, the few talents that we see dispersed in society, only serve to exalt her the more who unites them all.

The motive of our visit was to see a portrait of Madame Bonaparte, full length, as she wished our opinion upon the resemblance. In low tones, we expressed to each other our admiration of the skill of the artist in giving her the fullness and bloom of youth, without lessening the likeness, — a flattery which, dear to all women,

was invaluable in the eyes of the future empress ; for it went far to secure a throne.

By the side of this large picture was placed that of Madame Regnault de Saint Jean d'Angely ; one of the first in which Gerard revealed his talent to seize the expression, at the same time noble and simple, of a young and beautiful countenance. The portrait of the handsome Duchess d'Aiguillon proved no less the ability of the painter in the stately and majestic style of beauty, recalling to the mind the antique Juno.

Gerard surprised us in the midst of our enthusiasm for his pictures : he had the good grace to appear flattered, and received our praise with a modesty that appeared to me exaggerated, and therefore I thought could not be sincere ; a defect which, being seen so seldom, might pass for a virtue. I have since reproached him with it. "It is quite evident," he replied, "that you have not read the criticisms that have been lavished upon me. After such censures, accompanied with ridicule and abuse, how can I believe in my talent ?" These words, uttered in that tone of discouragement inspired by such injustice, have frequently recurred to me, bringing sad reflections. What ! thought I, forty years of incessant labor, of successful effort, is ineffec-

tual in stemming the torrent of abuse against genius, and, which is worse still, cannot counteract the grief which genius feels in seeing itself so calumniated! for, however much one may scorn the hand that inflicts the blow, the wound bleeds not the less; then true genius has such a tendency to distrust itself, that flattery is a less dangerous foe than the reverse.

The fear of blighting the name of our great poet by associating it with his own, prevented Gerard from exhibiting to an impartial public his portrait of Lamartine. It was the case also with that of M. de Humboldt. For the same reason, *The Plague of Marseilles*, one of the finest works of the artist, was withheld from the public.

The city of Marseilles had ordered this last-named painting from Gerard, offering a price worthy of his pencil; but he entreated their acceptance of it as a tribute of gratitude in memory of the happiness he had enjoyed when he disembarked in that great city on his return from his first visit to Rome; rich only in youth, genius, and hope.

In return for this noble souvenir, a gift that a king or a great artist alone could offer, there was to be seen upon the mantel of Gerard's saloon a

superb silver vase, chiselled in the style of Benvenuto. On it were engraved the date when presented, and an inscription expressive of the gratitude of the Marseillais.

There is more than one instance of the same description related, to the glory of Gerard; and the modesty, of which I dared to suspect the sincerity, was sufficiently proved by his refusal of the honors with which Charles X. intended to crown him after examining his picture of *The Entry of Henry IV. into Paris*. Being apprised by the Count de F*** that the king proposed to confer upon him the badge of the Legion of Honor, Gerard entreated his majesty to suspend this high recompense, saying he did not merit such honors, and it was sufficient to have been thought deserving the title conferred upon him by Louis XVIII. at the royal session of the Museum, the 2d of August, 1817.

“I am sorry not to see Gerard here: I would inform him, in the presence of Henry IV. that I have named him my first painter.”*

This eminent place was due to the artist who has painted so many works which have become the nation's riches. When we think of the immense exertions of Gerard, we cannot feel asto-

* *Moniteur* of the 3d of August, 1817.

nished at seeing him yield in so short a time to a disorder upon the nerves. Painting is, of all arts, that which soonest exhausts the vital powers.

And Gerard has painted, besides many other pictures, nearly a hundred full-length portraits, and two hundred and fifty busts. Some of his subjects were historical, some classical, some from legendary lore. *La Patrie en Danger* is a large picture ordered by the government.

But the cherished child of the painter, and that which was perhaps his most beautiful work, was *Achilles Resuming his Arms*. Nothing can compare with the head of Achilles,—to this reawakening of the hero for vengeance: he seems almost to move upon the canvas, as, impelled by rage, he promises the blood of Hector to the manes of Patrocles; the Trojans are depicted with the ghastliness and wildness of despair. This picture, of which the principal action and important figures are completed, may perhaps, without inconvenience, be finished by another hand less able.

His painting of Homer exists no more. Gerard was painting it at the time of the siege of Paris; and, in the despair which that event threw him into, he felt persuaded that he could do nothing

well. "No," said he one day, "this is not worthy of the glorious name of Homer;" and he tore the painting. The engraving, by M. Massard, still remains to prove the unjust severity of the painter towards himself, and his enthusiastic admiration for the sublime Homer.

Time would not suffice to name all the portraits recommended by the perfect execution of the artist, and the celebrity of the subject. It was said by some one, that the women of that epoch would always be styled beautiful, and the men glorious, as the pencil of Gerard had ensured it immortality.

The portrait of the emperor in his cabinet of the Tuileries, and those of all the imperial family, remain as living pages of our history. The portraits of the Princess de Chimay, of Madame Récamier, of the Duchess de Vicence, and of many other admirable persons, also remain to establish the fact, that the season of our glory was also that of the bloom of the most beautiful women of France.

The less we enjoy of personal glory, the more we cling to that of our friends. That is why I cannot refrain from relating the small share that I have had in the picture of Corinna. A month before the congress, I was at Aix-la-Chapelle

with Madame R***, who had come to take the waters. Though there as an exile, the same indeed in Rome, in Paris, everywhere, her saloon was the rendezvous of all the distinguished residents and agreeable people. The august Prince of Prussia, whom I frequently encountered, spoke to me of the desire he felt to fulfil a promise, made to the Baroness de Stael, of engaging some great artist to paint her *Corinna* at the moment of poetical inspiration. This promise, which the death of Madame de Stael had prevented him from fulfilling, — this work, doubly important both for the subject and the price that was offered, the prince desired to entrust to David. No one could deny the justice of this selection, knowing his fame as an artist; and then his position as an exile rendered it generous; but, I acknowledge, my jealous friendship was disturbed at seeing the palm ravished from the hands of Gerard. I vainly set forth his claims from what I knew would have been the desire of Madame de Stael, as her admiration and warm friendship for this artist would have led her without doubt to select him to illustrate her idea of the melancholy destiny of a woman of genius, beautiful, loving, and sacrificed without mercy to the prejudices of the world.

M. G*** was commissioned to write to David ; and — can one believe it ? — this great painter, whom, besides, a masterpiece would call back to his country, far from seizing upon this occasion for gaining fame and putting a happy period to his exile, made it one for traffic ; found fault with the handsome sum offered by the prince, and behaved in a manner so little worthy of the artist, and the subject of the picture, that Madame R***, whose kindness had made her unwilling to oppose herself to the interests of an exile, joined with me in saying that Gerard would never have written so. It was immediately decided that Gerard should paint Corinna. It is well known how beautifully he has fulfilled the desire of the prince, and realized the vision of the poet. The offering of this exquisite picture, made to Madame —, * rendered it doubly precious, first as a masterpiece of art, and then as a tribute due to the friendship of the most lovely of women for the most distinguished woman of the age.

Whilst describing the treasures of art that Gerard has bequeathed us, I have endeavored to withdraw my mind from the last sad visit I made him in that saloon where I had passed so many

* Perhaps to Madame Recamier. — *Trans.*

charming evenings ; but I will still linger, and indulge myself in reminiscences.

The soirées of Gerard offered charms to all minds, however varying. It has been remarked, that, in this saloon, open for so long a time to people of all varieties of opinion, where rivals met, and where reigned great freedom in conversation, still the discussions never degenerated into disputes ; but there was always some new object of interest presented which engrossed the general attention. Sometimes there was a new engraving made its appearance, or else a copy from the last mosaic disinterred from Pompeii ; sometimes it was a specimen of a process, unknown till then, which imitated the medallions, or perfected lithography. Then, a new guest would light upon us, of extraordinary interest, as Champollion, who would describe the wonders of Egypt ; or Pouqueville, who would create a universal shudder throughout the saloon by repeating his familiar conversations with the Pacha of Janina ; or some other traveller, with his travellers' wonders, would enchain us by the hour together. At another time, M. de la Ville would simply return from the theatre, and give us an analysis of the new drama he had just seen performed ; and that with all the spirit of

a man who knew how to write a play better than any one. In short, in this saloon the thought was never vague, the spirit never idle ; and the habit of occupying themselves with subjects of real importance rendered the guests very tolerant of the whims, oddities, and prejudices of people. Those who have much to say, talk but little scandal.

The pleasures of these charming soirées were not all confined to conversation. In Gerard's saloon, I have heard the beautiful voices, in harmonious accord, of Crescentini, Barilli, Tamburini, Pasta, Malibran, Judith, Julia Grisi, and others ; and the celebrated Paër and Rossini were the chiefs of the orchestra. Some of the ancient guests played a little for mere amusement, but were always ready to suspend the game at the least prelude from the piano, waiting for the sweet strains which they anticipated would follow from the melodious voices around ; knowing in advance that they would be exquisite, as they had not to fear mediocrity of talent.

In this saloon I have seen the master quit the great lords and distinguished men with whom he was conversing, to grasp the hand of the young artist, covered with the dust of the atelier ; which notice encouraged him with the hope that

he should obtain a corner of the Museum from the first-born of his palette.

The few who, through forty years, can look back upon Gerard's reünions, must have thronging recollections of the many interesting travellers, foreigners, nobles, authors, and agreeable people of all descriptions, whom they have met there every Wednesday evening. Pleasant recollections of past scenes hallow the joys of the present. The young artists and authors present, with their talent and wit, without effacing the memory of the dear departed, would prevent any painful lingering upon the past. Here were sometimes tête-à-têtes, and little circles formed by those of congenial taste who were drawn to each other; but M. de Balzac would talk to every body, for each one wished to enjoy his genius, the scintillations of his wit, and his gay and whimsical stories. The Count de Forbin, with the intelligence and taste of a man of fashion, the variety of a traveller, and the gayety of an artist, would converse with the pupils of the different schools, as with their masters.

I was fifteen days since in this saloon: it was the first time I had seen Gerard after my recovery from an illness which brought me to the gates of death for some months, and during

which time he had given me many proofs of his interest. I hear him still, thanking me for not being dead: these are his own words. He spoke to me of his projects for the spring, of the pleasure he should feel in showing me a painting he had had the *happiness* to finish. When he was ill the last year, he was so tormented with the fear of not living to accomplish this great picture himself, that he conjured his friends to destroy what he had already done, preferring to see his creation die with him than to imagine it embellished or enfeebled by another hand.

We spoke also of the return of M. Mimault, and the precious antiquities he had brought from Egypt; Gerard expressed to me a lively desire to see them, and to become acquainted with the distinguished man who had so skilfully availed himself of the protection and friendship of the Pacha of Egypt for the advantage of the arts and sciences. I charged myself with the invitation of Gerard to M. Mimault, who had also spoken to me of the pleasure he should feel in becoming acquainted with the scientific and accomplished artist. The time for introduction was appointed; it was to be the next Wednesday. And *death* was there, smiling at the project, and preparing to smite them each!

I was, however, encouraged respecting the health of Gerard by Mademoiselle Godefroy, the precious friend who has consecrated her life to gratitude to Gerard for the beautiful talent she owes to him. She told me that he worked upon his great picture; and, as his life was in his art, as soon as he could devote himself to *that*, I believed there was no more danger. Thus I replied to him with the smile of incredulity, when he said to me, *à propos* to his desire to see M. Schnetz elected member of the Academy, "Since my voice can now be to him of no avail, I will repeat to him what Gros said to Abel Pujol, 'All that I can now do for you, my friend, is to give you my place.'"

These were the last words that I heard from him; and yet I was there yesterday in the same place where he said them to me, — in that saloon where all mourned for him. I wished to see again that beautiful atelier, consecrated by his lovely genius. I was shown there by Madame Gerard, whose only consolation is to speak of him whom she weeps. Here, where he painted four days before his death, all seems awaiting him. The steps which he mounted to finish the heaven of his picture are still there; his box of colors, his brushes, are all ready for him to resume;

there are the crayons which he used for sketching his beautiful greyhound upon the corner of that picture already covered with personages of the dramatic style and expression that recall to mind the great Italian frescoes. One might say that the painter, wearied with tracing so many figures imaginary or unknown, had reserved to himself, as a relaxation, the pleasure of introducing into this immense work the portrait of a friend.

On the Wednesday after my last interview with Gerard, there crowded to his house an assemblage, drawn, according to custom, to this agreeable saloon to see the pictures, and to hear the artist talk; but, alas! his voice was extinguished in death! His wife, overwhelmed by the sudden blow, could hardly believe it real, and had not thought of warning the friends.

As the guests arrived, what a distressing scene ensued! They were met by an old servant, whose sobs and tears revealed the sad news he had not strength to utter. The friends who first arrived, breathless, scarcely able to support themselves, sat down upon the door-steps; ladies dressed for the soirée, weeping in their carriages, forgot to give orders to their coachmen to remove from this house of mourning. What an honor-

able testimony was this to our beloved artist! And the paleness of the young student from whom death had taken, by this sudden stroke, his master, his protector, his friend! And the loss of the weekly fête was no slight thing; for Wednesday was always to him a gala-day. In fine, the aspect of this saloon, the guests with their cries and lamentations, pressing back into the street, is a stronger testimony than any thing we can say to the extent of the loss we have suffered in the death of Gerard. It is a calamity to society, to the arts, and to France.



THE SALOON

OF

COUNTESS MERLIN.

WE hope that Madame the Countess Merlin will forgive us for inserting her name at the head of those who honor the arts and good society. She is one of the small number who can brave publicity, and she has recognized this truth by publishing her memoirs. We will venture, we hope, without offending, to repair one omission in them : she has neglected to speak of her own talents and accomplishments, as also of her efforts by reünions to assemble and encourage the artists of all countries ; and they, in return, have made her saloon the paradise of harmonies.

It is impossible to appreciate too highly the influence that the saloon of the Countess Merlin has exerted upon the social music of Paris. It

was she who first discovered that a fashionable woman may also be distinguished as a musician ; for no person can deny, that, had Madame Merlin been born in the class of artists, she would have attained the highest success, both on the stage and at our concerts.

To a brilliant voice, powerful and sweet, whose mellow tones floated around and embosomed you in a sea of melody, was united a rich variety in expression, which would have fitted her for the musical drama, and rendered her the idol of the public, had she not felt satisfied in being prized by the amateurs of good music. But we can judge of the effect that the genius of Madame Merlin would have produced upon a large audience, when we recall to mind the applauses which resounded in the Hall of Vauxhall the evening of the concert given for the benefit of the Greeks. This good action, freely and nobly accomplished, did no less honor to the talent and taste than to the generosity of Madame Merlin ; for it required all her superiority not to fear competition with a genius so distinguished as Madame Dubignon, the charming pupil of Crescentini, so skilled in the grand Italian style, who performed the recitative as Grassini, and sang with that melodious intonation so dear to the

French, before the roulades had dethroned the song.

This reünion of so many lovely women, whose charming voices were accompanied by the greatest musical composer of the age, and who quitting their domestic seclusion, and braving the criticisms of the paying public, not regarding their own timidity, all for charity's sweet sake, is a remembrance that will remain in our hearts through all time.

We recognized in the choir the daughter of the Duchess de D***, and the Countess de L***, and many others whom the attraction of a good action had induced to offer their aid. No malign spirit has dared to censure them; and their heroic devotion, which did not injure their estimation in society, should serve as an example to the distinguished women of the present day, who fear they shall compromise their dignity or their modesty by this offering of their talents for the service of the poor.

What better improvement could be made of that privileged education, — those accomplishments acquired with so much pains, — those noble and courteous manners that are ordinarily the share of well-educated women, and even of those who are educated for effect? For it is

necessary to be frank, even with the public. The mother who spares no expense in cultivating the intellect and graces of her daughter; who at enormous sums purchases the services of Bordogni, Bertini, or Labarre, in order that she may become very accomplished in music; who puts her in penance when she omits or forgets her spelling lesson; who obliges her to study history and belles-lettres, — this mother hopes, that, in offering to her daughter so many opportunities for improvement, she will deign to excel in something. There is sometimes one found, it is true, insensible to all the seductions of science and art. We speak not of those whose good fortune withdraws them from the pursuit of glory: they are the elect of this world, of whose privileges the poor in spirit are not less the sharers than in the other; but, if a person cannot endow herself with the faculties that nature refuses, neither can she neutralize the poetical sentiment, the genius for and love of the arts, which animates the heaven-elected soul. A person endowed or afflicted with such a soul must yield to all the consequences; for genius and aptitude impel her career; and, once risen above the grand level of mediocrity, she will have nothing to expect from the benevolence of the world. It is then to admiration she

must have recourse ; *noble refuge*, which resembles the palace of marble and gold, in which the unhappy inmates perish from cold and famine. But, as there are no means of gaining over the fairy who endows or disinherits us at birth, the better course is to forget that in which we fail, and avail ourselves of that which we possess ; and what can be more honorable, even more virtuous, than to consecrate our talents to the relief of the unhappy ?

This is to put ourselves in evidence, says one : without doubt ; but this mother of whom we speak, and who wishes her daughter to sing, not the simple duets of the French opera, which formerly sufficed for a family concert, but the most beautiful airs of Malibran, of Grisi, — is it to enchant the last days of some dear old relations, or to charm the noble châtelain who is to marry her daughter, that this good mother forces her through so many gamuts, trills, and scientific flourishes ? No : she wishes that all Paris should know that her daughter possesses superior talent ; and far should I be from blaming this maternal pride, the most excusable of any that fills the female breast. I would only say, that, this desire of admiration being recognized, nothing should prevent its becoming avail-

able for a good action. We have lamented the loss of saloons that revolutions or death have closed for ever; we have been afflicted at the prostration or profanation of temples erected to the ancient deity of the French, Conversation; but with Madame Merlin this goddess has sought refuge, and we have found consolation. Thanks to the élite, who still collect the children of genius at their reünions, where they may yet find the worship of the arts, eloquence, and wit, with that exquisite politeness for which France has so long offered a perfect model!

The genius of music diffused a charm over the saloon where Madame Merlin presided. There the young and lovely maidens, whose angel-voices had echoed only in the family circle, united in singing the psalms of Marcello, the chorus of the *Creation* by Hayden, or that of *Moses*, with the purity which gives to sacred music a rank above all other. At the sound of these divine accords, the flighty and frivolous women, whom we should think the most inaccessible to religious impressions, trembled and wept. Free-thinkers, the most decided unbelievers, felt, in listening to this harmony, that there was another world beyond this; and there, surrounded by all the beauties and the luxuries of

the present, they had visions of one still more exquisite, and felt that such noble expressions of the soul could only be addressed to God.

Nothing could exceed the ardor with which all obstacles were braved that intervened on the evenings of the Count and Countess Merlin's soirées. Their invitations were accepted at all hazards. Engagements, colds, balls, nothing prevailed over the desire to hear such music, always so finely executed. And then this liberality to the arts by those who have shone in another sphere, and have attained military glory, has something noble and interesting in it: one loves to see the nobleman and warrior who has passed his life in the toils of warfare, enjoy the leisure of peace; and the duets sang by mother and daughter in this sanctuary of the affections and of the arts cause double pleasure. How delightful to see motherly love descend to sisterly union! How much grace in the scene!

I have said that it is impossible to appreciate too highly the influence which the saloon of the Countess Merlin has exerted upon the social music of Paris. Amongst all the changes in France, we affirm that there has not been a more complete revolution effected than in our music, and the manner of performing it.

One of our most ancient usages was that of regaling our guests with female singing; and this, whether they met together in a palace, a citizen's house, or a hut. From the simple ironer, who was invited to a treat of pancakes, in case she would come and sing a Christmas carol on Christmas eve, even up to the noble heiress who was released from the convent to sing at her grandmother's dessert, the melodies of Rameau or Lully, every saloon, great or small, whether adorned with gilded seats, or chairs of rush, held in requisition her songstress. Old or young, this tamed linnet was the born guest for all the grand dinners given in the family; and, as she knew the price of this favor, she never waited to be entreated. The laying on of the last and most humble fruits of the dessert, the *mélange* of nuts, figs, raisins, &c. which always was served up with the macaroons, this was the signal — the open sesame — for the songstress to commence, without any instrument to strike the chord; without any prelude to warn the public of what awaited them.

This recalls to our mind that young lady, distinguished for her musical talents, who found herself a guest at a *fête* of this description: perceiving she was expected to play the first part,

she suddenly burst forth with these lines from the grand opera, *La Belle Arsène*, without thinking that her future could be disquieted from the choice of these words: "No, no, no; I am too proud to submit to slavery."

But at that time it was common to sing but one air from a favorite opera, and that was sung upon all occasions, suitable or unsuitable; the singer generally chose the most popular air from the most fashionable opera. So much the worse at that nuptial feast which took place at the time when the air from *Castor and Pollux* was in vogue; it was necessary to undergo the funeral chant of "pale torches, trappings of woe," before arriving at the convivial songs and merry refrains suited for the occasion.

In the meantime, the French opera, which became the delight of the fashionable world, took the place of the tragic opera and ariettas, of those melancholy wailings that had subdued us; nothing but ariettas was the mode; this brought much confusion, and overwhelmed with ridicule the poor innocent who began to sing, after a supper at the house of the Marchioness de Pusieux, an air from one of the exploded operas.

These table-melodies ceased when it became

the custom to sing very gay songs. Such strains the pretty singer could not perform; for, when they commenced, the young people left the table, — a measure as profitable to the innocence of the one as the gayety of the other.

The use of the harpsichord, then of the piano-accompaniment, set aside the solitary song; as there was no cantatrice who would venture her voice without the support of an instrument to chord. Then the dramatic, with pathos and passion, o'erstepped the arietta; the absorbing interest of the scene was too high-wrought for the simple song, and the strains of the native untaught singer were annihilated under the recitative and the *éclat* which attended the scientific cantatrice.

Art gained without doubt by this revolution: masters from Italy taught the musical amateurs to prolong the musical note to an indefinite length; initiated them in the great art of managing the respiration, of exhaling or inhaling, suppressing or dilating the voice at will; they dropped the monotonous scream that inspired the benevolent auditors with the fear of seeing them suffocate in the midst of the long phrase which deprived them of breath. Every person enrolled himself under the banner of the Italian or Ger-

man school. These two foreign powers induced a sort of civil war in France, that bonny France, so indifferent before to the progress of harmony ; to whom the airs of her old ballads, and some minuet cadences, sufficed ; who loved in her songs only the lively refrain, gay, witty, or sportive, without concerning herself with the science of music. This same France, which, with the exception of England, had been the least musical country in Europe, suddenly took fire for and against German harmony and Italian melody : it was as a religious war ; families were estranged, the ménage of the household disturbed, friendships for ever dissolved, in consequence of these musical quarrels. The clearest heads were not exempt from this vertigo ; the most gentle tempers were ruffled. I cannot recall to mind, without smiling, all that I suffered in my early days from this folly.

A wife, beautiful, agreeable, devoted to a husband, amiable, intelligent, and as little inconstant as possible, — here, certainly, were all the elements of a perfect ménage. Thus nothing had hitherto disturbed that of my mother, when she discovered one day that I had a beautiful voice, and some inclination for music. Immediately I was surrendered by paternal orders to the guid-

ance of the celebrated Imperani, the scientific professor from Italy, who developed the beautiful talent of Morichelli. But, as this great professor had the most profound contempt for the music of Glück, which my mother adored, she made me take lessons from Richer by her authority. He was the first master of native song: he gave lessons to the queen, and, with Piccini, directed her concerts, and sang even at the court.

Alas! these musical soirées became to the queen the only relief from all political inquietudes, all the dark presentiments which cast their shadow over her horizon, and filled her heart with ominous forebodings. But she could not freely surrender herself to these innocent pleasures, for poison was in the cup: the suspicions of her people induced fearful presages, which preoccupied her mind. Scarcely dared she to permit the duet of *Armide* to be sung before a court desirous to please her by applauding this charming piece of Chevalier Glück. It is true that these suffrages were not elicited so much as a tribute to the genius of the composer, as to his title of compatriot to the queen. This woman, who was even reproached for loving her brother, could not protect German talent without the crime of high treason; it was necessary to com-

pose her visage, to dissimulate the enthusiasm inspired by such noble strains, to conceal her tears in hearkening to the *Adieux d'Iphigénie*, under penalty of being suspected of culpable partiality, of preserving some remembrance of her country, of feeling emotion in the strains which recalled it, of being designated as the *Austrian*, the foreigner ; and one knows in what these titles would terminate.

Without fearing such cruel consequences from my admiration of the music of Glück, I took care to practise it only in the absence of my father. Sometimes, after being fatigued with my German lessons, in which the notes of the opera music were so high, and sustained so long upon one note, my father, having met Piccini, would bring him home to dine with us, and would call upon me in my exhausted state, already hoarse from my musical declamations, to perform the grand airs of *Dido*. Then, to account for my feebleness of voice, and defect in respiration, I would invent some pretext, without acknowledging the true cause, — a discretion recognized by my mother, and amply repaid by a grateful glance.

I relate these little facts only to convey an idea of the importance that was then attached to

music. The appearance of a new opera was an event: it nearly led to a battle: one almost risked his life for his idol, as, in times of ignorance, Christians murdered one another to further the comprehension of their religion. The spirit of combat is so natural to the French, that, before they feel, appreciate, or love an art, they are all ready to fight for it.

It was essential that the study of music should become general in France, to lead, in fine, to the great discovery, that there are only two descriptions of music in the world, the good and the bad; and that a masterpiece has no need of a country. Since the French music has been so long and justly ridiculed, we should come to the agreement that the partitions — *de Joseph, de la Dame Blanche, de Fra Diavolo*, and many other charming compositions, should take rank among the great powers of harmony.

Exclusion, that narrow-minded despot, which imprisons itself in its own treasury from fear of taking pleasure in the riches of another, had no access to the saloon of the Countess Merlin. The different sects attached to the worship of the arts, like different parties in politics, met there without collision. Noisy discussion never drowned the notes of the piano; and, if some-

times it was a little too sonorous, it proceeded from the vivacious spirits of the talkers of the present day, and disturbed no more than another sort of music.

In this saloon, the most accomplished performers forgot their rivalry in the ardor of the execution, which surpassed the hopes even of the composer himself. There, Rossini heard Madame Malibran and Mademoiselle Sontag sing together his brilliant duets. There, that jealousy which the public loves to foment, yielded to the desire of pleasing the mistress of the house, and winning her esteem; knowing that her affectionate and impartial appreciation would accord to each one his share of praise, and insure to him his portion of success. There, all the beautiful partitions of Meyerbeer, Rossini, Bellini, Donizetti, had been performed, before the composers were crowned upon the stage. In fine, we were so accustomed at these soirées to the most exquisite music from the most accomplished performers, that, finding myself in company the other evening with many persons who came in from the opera, and who were admiring with enthusiasm the fine voice and style of Duprez, some one said to me, "I am so sorry not to have heard him this evening ;

but," she added, "we shall without doubt soon applaud him in the saloon of Madame Merlin."

The splendid harmony of these brilliant concerts quite gains the victory over the coldness of our public. We can cite many saloons where there is excellent music ; but how is it listened to ? Good God ! what a cold shudder seizes the unhappy artist, called by the *ritournelle* to sing before a circle of women mutually and exclusively occupied with their ornaments ! Despair seizes him ! appalled at the sight of the stony visages around him, whether blest with beauty or afflicted by ugliness, equally insensible to the charms of music, he is deprived of half his talent ; but, if by miracle he can with the other half excite any emotion in a few amateurs who do not fear committing themselves by some efforts to applaud, these timid *bravos*, falling upon an icy heap, echo as sadly as the alms thrown by some charitable hand into an empty poor-box at church. To see these young ladies so insensible to the sweetest accents, it would seem that the soul was absent or paralyzed, if we did not know its energies were exhausted two hours before in imprecations against Mademoiselle Baudran or Mademoiselle Palmyre, for a hat sent too late, or an ill-fitting dress.

We hope that this misplaced zeal will soon bestow itself upon subjects more worthy of calling it forth, and that professors or amateurs will be no longer impelled to supernatural efforts to vanquish the apathy of the *beau monde*; for, if we deplore the insensibility, the silence, which sometimes succeeds the most ravishing airs, we suffer still more in seeing a beautiful young maiden attempt to galvanize a languid audience at a *soirée*, by exhaling the plaintive notes and musical sobs and sighs of betrayed love, or by singing in no very chaste language a ditty describing the misery of the poor forsaken one, and her lamentations over the inconstancy or coldness of an ingrate. If these musical romances, like the drama, are a mirror of the age, the women of the present time will descend to posterity as the most wearisome and the least loved of any that ever appeared on the face of the earth. Folly against folly, I prefer that of the men who formerly sang of their grievous martyrdom from the scorn of the cruel one, to that of the damsels of the present day, whose fashion it is to become in love, as if this unhappiness was to be acquired: they think they attain to the highest dramatic power of music, when they cast their eyes to the ceiling, and swear

devotion to love. Is it not painful to hear such love-lorn ditties from virgin-lips? And these young amateurs, so pure, so beautiful, in whom the natural timidity of their age offers so striking a contrast to the words which they sing, — would they not be more interesting and pleasing in the soft and tender strains of the plaintive romance than in imitating the despair and frenzy of lovers? Languor is so becoming to the female countenance, without counting upon the interest that repressed feeling has over that which is expressed. As to the rest, we criticize this fashion only to prevent its reviving; for it seems to us past and gone. The ballads which are sung so charmingly this winter by Madame Damoreau are now considered the models of good taste, as the amateurs in this species of music are eager to imitate them; and this good old taste of the Parisian saloons, like all ancient powers, abused by hard and whimsical appellations, which we call *Shakspearian* rail-lery, exercises no less influence upon the majority of the public.

What strengthens my faith in the continuance of Madame Merlin's saloon is, if there was a sudden extinction of voice or good will in the performers, still there would remain so many

eloquent talkers, that we could console ourselves for the loss of one pleasure by retaining the other. One might say, perhaps, that it is useless to bestow such perfect music upon such as resist her fascinations; for the charm of good conversation takes the place of every other: it is the pleasure of pleasures. To this we reply, that we can obtain silence from those who would break it most agreeably; that people without ideas talk always, and in a high key, and it is good to oppose to them some people of intelligence in the company, who know how to be silent, and for whom music is a source of inspiration, — as all talents are brothers. Yes; genius is a confraternity, of which the members always recognize and comprehend one another, notwithstanding their different languages. Envy does much to divide, persecute, exile, those she attaints of genius; but, like the descendants of those people proscribed for the crime of their ancestors, whenever they meet, be it even at the end of the world, they will immediately understand and greet each other as children of the same family.

We shall, no doubt, one day become a great political people; so it is to be presumed, after all the pains we have taken upon that point for

forty years past; but, as the education of the people is long and difficult, I think it will be discreet to guard well the amenities and charms of life, whilst waiting to acquire the great virtues, and that high wisdom indispensable to good governments and even to the happiness of the governed. Why throw to the flames the ornaments which embellish life, before we have acquired the solid impermeable vestment which should shelter us from all intemperate politics? And, as we have not yet reached that paradisaical state of the nation, where the martyrs of all parties depose their palms upon the altar of their country, let us content ourselves with the patrimony of our fathers; and in these times, so decried, resign ourselves to live still some years, if it may be, for genius, for pleasure, and glory.

PARISIAN LETTERS,

BY MADAME GIRARDIN.



PARISIAN LETTERS.

LETTER I.

THE great events of the past week are the domestic ; for some days there has been nothing to be seen in our streets but clocks, pianos, beds, and commodes ; Paris is a magazine of ambulating furniture ; the inhabitants of Chaussée d'Antin 'seem flying towards Marais, the dwellers at Marais are hastening to Chaussée d'Antin. You meet hosts in this immense *chassé croisé*. You cannot take a step without encountering some vehicle filled with household goods ; or you run against a sofa, legs reversed, and the seat garnished with all sorts of chairs, suspended wonderfully in the air, and menacing you at every step. You turn a corner, and strike *nosé* to nose the bust of some great man ; to the right you encounter a piano, to the left a candelabre. Would you believe it ? Yesterday

we surprised a simple young man adjusting his cravat before a large and beautiful mirror, which was proceeding with measured steps before him : this ambulating toilet amused us. Fifteenth of October, *frightful day* ! can there be a time more sad than this of general muster ? Yes, the night before ! For there is nothing more awful than this thought. To-morrow, at this hour, there will indubitably be something broken among my precious treasures. Then, admiring an elegant cup, you say to it, “ Perhaps it may be thou.” Then, examining some infirm old lolling chairs, you look at them piteously, saying, “ Poor friends ! at your age it is cruel to be rudely thrust into the street !” The husband is disquieted in his sleep, dreaming that he shall have to replace the mutilated furniture ; and the wife, in her broken slumbers, thinks over all the mortifications she has suffered for six years in the house she is quitting. “ Shall I be more happy in another ?” she asks herself. “ Go, remove, poor woman, try all quarters of Paris, mortifications will follow thee with thy furniture, thy silver, thy kitchen utensils : an unhappiness of six years’ standing is not in events, but in disposition ; and thy husband and thou will carry the same tempers through all countries, all

streets, and in all apartments." In the meantime, it is the unhappiness of localities that we shall notice. An ill-contrived apartment may destroy all the comfort of life; a woman should have her room at her own command, or the most grievous quarrels may be excited; I would not answer for the future of that woman who could not make a fire in her own apartment. A small dining-room might ruin a man of business; one too large might drive a poor man to the alms-house. We have known young married people to wish they had no children because their house was so small. We warn persons of these inconveniences, that they may avoid them.

The fashionable world have returned to Paris. The streets are Parisian again. The theatre is brilliant with those who had returned from their summer excursions. The success which Madame Ancelot's dramas have obtained for her at every representation have confirmed us in a remark we made a long time since, that the French public is, of all kings, the one that demands the most flattery; and it considers him the most skilful painter who paints the portrait the least resembling. The French public have a horror of truth. That which pleases them is exaggerations of all sorts; monsters in virtue, monsters

in vice. They will not endure seeing people represented as they are in life, versatile and inconsistent. Such is the play of Madame Ancelot. We would not be understood as saying that the charming character of Maria is false; we know, on the contrary, that the life of more than one woman has been a long and pure sacrifice; but we say that the representation of this sublime virtue is not an absolute truth, — it is a truth of exception: truth immoral, because illusive; truth fatal, because it disgusts us with the natural; truth culpable, because it renders us ungrateful to friends who surround us, who are almost good, and whom we disdain for imaginary heroes that she introduces; truth servile and flattering, and for that very reason the only truth received at the theatre. Thus write all the virtuous journals of this play: “See the good, the true drama; there is no longer bare-faced crime of the modern school of dramas; this is the world such as it is.” Each of the audience thinks he or she is the faithful husband or wife, and exclaims, That is right. O drama, drama! how true to life!

Ah! Madame Ancelot is a skilful artist: we know it; she has proved it in her works. She knows the best, of all the women in France,

what to say in order to please and flatter. She treats the public as her friends ; she is much too wise to tell them what she knows ; she wishes success ; she knows the world too well to paint it as she sees it.

Yes, poor old public ! Molière, without Louis XIV. would not have dared to paint thee ; it needs a king more powerful than thou art to make thee hear the veritable truth ; thou lovest only fictions, and thou art served according to thy wishes ; the mirror which reflected thy true features would terrify thee ; the voice which called thee by thy true name thou wouldst fly. Thou wouldst curse the genie who revealed thee to thyself ; thou wouldst treat him as an enemy, and that is right — to know ourselves is very sad.

LETTER II.*

The reünions begin ; already some persons have appointed their reception evenings, but the soirées are not complete ; for those husbands who are great proprietors make a pretext of their

* This letter is written by Madame Guy.

plantations and agricultural cares, to guard their young wives, as long as possible, far from the pleasures the city offers ; not reflecting that the richest love to pass over the season for gifts, considering them a species of tax imposed upon the vanity of the avaricious, as well as that of the lavish, from which distance and solitude can alone disfranchise.

It is towards the twentieth of the month of December that the scourge begins to be felt ; first, a general agitation is perceived, arising from perplexity in the choice of objects that will gratify the recipients ; to this succeeds despair of ever reconciling the gift one selects with the price she can or will give. Oh ! the sleepless nights that follow days of anxious thought ; the fear lest the present should be too useful, and hurt the pride of the friend, or too fanciful, and imply that she is capricious ; but it is less dangerous to consult her caprices than her needs, and the talent of divining the one or the other is seldom attended with success.

Nothing can equal the tacit ambition of the receivers of the New Year's gift, — that of the women, above all. How often has it been met by disdainful mockery, when concealed by sweetmeats, although it may have cost half the

yearly income of the young donor, and plunged him in debt for still more ! How many friendships cooled, how many connections broken off, in consequence of the expectations not being answered ! This description of rancor has the character and constancy of concentrated passion, as it must be endured with outward composure. How, in such a case, complain of the avarice of a friend, without confessing one's own ? There is, therefore, no healing balm for the wound ; it behooves her to guard herself well even from an ironical smile at the mean gift which has so disappointed the expectations of the recipient. This betrayal too often escapes unwittingly, and the malicious avail themselves of the oversight by equally ridiculing the parsimony of the giver and receiver.

Already the caresses of the children, the assiduity of the servants, is in ratio to the gifts they hope to receive from their relations or masters.

Already the jewellers polish their old jewels, that they may sell them as new to all strangers and provincials, who would be ill received on their return home, if not the envoys of robes, hats, and jewels, esteemed in the mode. This is the passport to a welcome from their families.

What a season of hope and fear for the

grisette and the enamored maiden ! How much distraction of mind, how many reveries attach themselves to this important question, "What will he give me ?"

What ingenious means are devised to stimulate the munificence of their lovers ! One recounts, in a manner which appears disinterested, the delicate attention of the Prince T***, who sent to his mistress, at this time last year, a simple basket of oranges ; but each orange was wrapt round with a bill of a thousand francs — what exquisite gallantry ! Another, more fastidious, expresses much displeasure at such a gift, but would recommend that the bank-bills should be concealed in jewels *à la mode*, or fashionable furniture ; useful objects would find favor in her eyes ; but that which both pretend to appreciate above all is the attention of the giver ; it is so delicate, and the manner of revealing the intention so touching : *it has cost so much money.*

If this month has its charges, it has also its profits ; the service in every house is performed with more exactness ; there are no letters lost, no journals missing, the visiting cards are punctually delivered to those who claim them, the lodger no longer knocks twenty times at the car-

riage entrance before the gate is opened, the boxkeeper does not keep you waiting in the lobby of the theatre, the coachman is more seldom drunk, the cook leaves in repose the cover of the basket, the chambermaid grumbles no longer, the children do not cry when nothing is the matter, the governesses intermit their beatings, every thing goes on more easily, each one does his duty, every courtier is at his post, — for each one hopes to have his name inscribed on the list for favors; the saloons of the ministers are filled, government meets with less resistance, princes with fewer assassins.

But how many deceptions, jealousies, even enmities, date their birth from this deceitful month! What constrained visages, what contortions and grimaces of gratitude, without counting the conjugal lies! We will favor our friends with titles of the different species of New Years' gifts: —

First, the duty gift, given and received as the payment of a bill of exchange; that is to say, grudgingly on one side, and with no gratitude on the other.

Next, the impost duty, which it is necessary to satisfy, under penalty of being served the last, or even not at all, when you dine with your friends.

The chance gift, which simply consists in giving this year to the new friends the little presents that were received the year before from the old ones. This is the ass's bridge of the vain economists.

The fraudulent gift, which is particularly flattering, as it purports to have been purchased for the friend, or to have been sent by an old aunt, whose three years' revenue could not pay for this lying gift.

The waning gift. This reveals the phases and revolutions foreseen by astronomers of the heart, where love passes to friendship, friendship to habit, habit to indifference. This species of gift commences ordinarily with some rich talisman, the luxury of which, above all, consists in its uselessness, and ends by a bag of confectionery.

The intriguing or calculating gift. This opens the bureau of ministers, the boxes at the theatre, where there is no more room for any one, and the door of the pretty girl which had shut you out.

We have also the politic gift, the most *ingenious* of all, invented by fortune-hunters, solicitors, and artful women. It is only a few choice spirits who have the *finesse* essential to success in this present. They must not only give but little to obtain much ; but the choice of the present,

and the means of making it available, require shrewdness and address. Wish you some place dependent upon a minister? gain an introduction to his wife, or, if faithless to her, to the concealed object of his passion; study her caprice that he has forgotten to satisfy; send your offering anonymously, your meaning will be *divined* by her, and the office you desire be obtained from him. Does your fate depend upon a brave administrator whose wife is faithful? fear not ruining yourself in baubles for the children: your place is more sure than the revenues of Spain.

Do you wish to assure yourself of an inheritance from some old relation? observe his mania; endeavor to discover what is the piece of furniture, the book, or the exquisite dish that his avarice refuses him; give a watch to his housekeeper's little son; persuade her to obtain a pension from the old man for her child, and you will not miss of the inheritance. This is the politic gift, in all its diplomacy. As to the calculations of the woman who constrains or excites the generosity of her friends by her rich offerings, that is to be classed amongst vulgar speculations.

LETTER III.

The summer or dead season has past ; Paris hails her emigrants who are returning after their summer exile, and her hotels and streets again teem with life. All hail to winter ! live Paris ! the rain falls in torrents ; the winds roar, — welcome deluge ! welcome winds ! happy presages of our pleasures !

The conversation in the saloons at this moment is a long series of questions, for the most part without reply. The absentees, just returned, exclaim with eagerness and some trepidation : “ I know nothing that is going on ; what do people read ? what play ? what piece must all the world applaud ? what is the style of dress ? ”

Those who have been stationary in Paris rejoin : “ From whence come you ? what have you seen ? what news bring you ? were you at R*** at the same time as Madame de P*** ? Have you met, at the waters of Aix, the Duchess de G*** ? have you had private theatricals at the Château de G*** ? ”

At first the dialogue is very confused ; happily, soon the murderers of character clear a passage.

"I have passed a month at the Demersacs'," says one. "My God! how cold I was in their old manor: the donjon of the old castle stands firm, but it is a true granary." "Oh, horrible! the middle age must be quite insupportable, without a fire in every room." "A fire! pshaw! we have not even a fagot in the chimney. Demersac is a man of method; you never in his house see a fire kindled before All Saints' Day. This is not through avarice; but it is system. At dawn, All Saints' Day, his people serve you up all manner of combustibles; enormous logs, charcoal, peat, and wood of every variety. They refuse you nothing, for All Saints' Day has arrived." "Ah, indeed! then make your arrangements next year to visit Demersac after that day." "I have made my arrangements for next year: I do not expect to go there at all." "As for me," said another, "I have passed my summer very agreeably: one part with my cousin Bellerive, the rest with my ladies Letelloy; all very charming and brilliant women. (There are some people whose acquaintances always consist of eminently charming and agreeable women; and who, unhappily, in quoting them, only retail the flattest commonplaces.) These friends diverted me very much. In our walks my cousin Bellerive was

insupportable : for instance, she had a great horror of toads ; and, as she thought, they crossed her path in every direction. I was her protector, and she continually tormented me by exclaiming, ' My cousin, my cousin, a toad ! a toad ! ' It was in vain for me to say, ' It is a frog ! ' she would fly ; and we were obliged to take another path. Then she could not walk upon the hay or stubble, that made her sick ; thus we were driven to the high road, which was not very country-like. With my ladies Letelloy it was quite another thing ; they were no fine ladies, always trembling from fear of snakes and toads ; these are the persons to my taste. They can climb hills, and thread the woods ; such women are charming in the country ; only Madame Edouard is a poor player at billiards, and sets up her pretensions for the best, and, when she loses, she is in a raging passion. The other is proud ; but it is as bad, for her affronts are sometimes of very long duration. One day she insisted upon it that I had cheated her. Indeed ! Another time, when her sister-in-law had won, she was so angry as even to reproach her with her birth (Madame Auguste is the daughter of a butcher ; but rich, immensely rich) ; that pained me. Poor little Madame Auguste, who is so elegant,

so much admired, and who has not at all the air of being the daughter of her father ! She wept, and these ladies were at enmity eight days. They feigned sickness, and kept their chambers, leaving me to dine alone ; but the child of each was attacked with the scarlet fever, and that reconciled them."

"How, my dear sir, is that your idea of passing the summer very agreeably ? How charming to walk upon the high road ; to play at billiards with women who get enraged ; dine alone ; and take care of children who have the scarlet fever ! You are easily amused."

"These were only passing clouds, which scarcely interrupted our diversions ; for you must understand that these ladies were very ingenious and witty."

"As for me," said a third interlocutor, "I acknowledge that I was bored to death. I have passed two mortal months with the Chèvremonts, the vainest of misers. In my opinion, nothing is more dreary than to be ill in the house of people who grudge themselves common comforts, and who endure all sorts of privations in their splendid abodes ; surrounded by luxuries, with the use of none. Figure to yourself a magnificent chateau, which fails in every comfort ; an

immense saloon which cannot be used, because the furniture is so handsome. They sit in small rooms; that is to say, ten persons are crowded into a boudoir, suitable for a tête-à-tête for lovers or intimate friends; it was stifling. The little Baroness R*** and myself passed our time in the garden. Only imagine a dining-room, long as a refectory, sculptured, ornamented in the richest style, and no carpet on the floor! Cheap wine, served up in crystals worthy of royalty; beautiful table linen, dingy and badly done up; japan trays wiped so as to look smeared; clammy and greyish bread, affecting Parisian forms; scanty dishes of ragouts, mysterious and pretending, whose origin is impenetrable, but of which the horrible seasoning is certain." "Oh! tell me not of people who will at the same time be great lords and frugal housekeepers; who will allow themselves a cook, only upon condition that he shall spoil the meats." "I forgot to mention, that, under pretext of delicate health, Madame de Chèvremont sent us all to bed at nine; the lamps were extinguished, the windows closed, and at ten o'clock the whole family were in deep repose, excepting ourselves, who were visitors. In the meantime, three or four of us assembled in the apartment of the

little baroness, who is pretty and agreeable. Here we endeavored to recompense ourselves for the tediousness of the day. Fagerolles was with us, and his gay wit was a great relief; he has the talent of mimicry, and he imitated the manner of Madame Chèvremont to perfection. I do not know how he could do it; but he made us die with laughing. One evening he borrowed a bonnet and shawl of the baroness; the chambermaid lent him some reddish yellow curls, exactly like Madame Chèvremont's hair; and, thus equipped, he entered our apartments suddenly, at one in the morning, just as we were going to take tea; we believed it was she herself. How it alarmed us! but we had a hearty laugh. The brother of the baroness has composed a charming song upon this hoax, which he sung under the windows of Madame de Chèvremont; the baroness, who draws well, has made a complete caricature of old Chèvremont. The old man is represented as riding upon his pony in his night-cap and night-gown! It is delectable! You may see it in my album."

"It seems to me, good sir, that you had a merry time in this wearisome chateau. You passed the day in walking with the little baroness; the evening with merry companions. You stopped

with them till one in the morning, laughing, hearing songs, and looking at caricatures. I doubt whether the pleasures of your winter can amuse you like the weariness of your summer."

"Ah ! I see you envy me ; I fear you are not quite satisfied with your summer amusements." "I," said a whimsical old man, who assumed the right to say any thing, — "I was neither contented nor discontented, amused nor wearied. At my age, to respire a pure air, and view a pleasant prospect, is the only pleasure I ask in the country. I was at the house of Madame de Treillage, a very agreeable person, whom I have known for a long time, and where I am treated as a friend of the house." "And a little too much so," added the malicious old man, "at which I have a right to complain, inasmuch as there are certain attentions to certain guests, suppressed in my case. I will explain myself: with some she is of a grand size and good figure ; and before me she ventures to be frightfully meagre. You laugh ; but it is the truth. In the morning, when we are alone, she comes down in her dressing-gown : she is a shadow, a true skeleton ; her dress descends to the ground ; it is quite perpendicular ; I pity her : and then, all of a sudden, she appears at dinner (there's a power of stylish people at

dinner) as the most beautiful figure, round, graceful, bewitching. In this sudden metamorphosis, I remarked some varieties which amused me greatly. The beauty of her figure augmented in proportion to the importance and dignity of the guests she expected. She made a great point of titles : for instance, for a count, she was only round and plump ; for a marquis, she was the Venus de Milo ; for a lord, she made herself a Circassian figure ; for a duke, her size amounted almost to obesity ; and for me, nothing, — for me, who am an old friend of her family, — me, who have rendered such services to her husband, she was not at the least cost ; that was humiliating. I deserved from her more regard, and more embonpoint.”

“ O you wicked one ! ” cried the pretty Madame H***, “ thus to berate your *kind* châtelains. Have they invited you to pass the summer at their chateau, that you may study their sins at your leisure ? ”

“ Yes, without doubt, since they have not offered us any other pleasures.”

The moral of this is, that it is very foolish for our friends in the country to receive as inmates those importunate people who often at their houses amuse themselves at their expense ; that

they must only admit to the interior, friends whom they have known a long time. For ourselves, in hearkening to these recitals, we rejoiced sincerely that we had refused the agreeable invitations that have been tendered us. It is sad to be confined a month in the house with friends, and discover that they are much less amiable than we thought them ; that they have all sorts of mania, pretensions, and defects ; that they are avaricious, vain ; above all, wearisome. It is much better to pass your summer in Paris, and preserve your illusions ; the health is lost, but the friendship retained ; and that deserves the sacrifice. Friends who can stand the test of the country are so rare, and those who support it with advantage are so dangerous ! After three months of solitude in a chateau, we must hate or love. It is in Paris only that we can resolve the problem of sweet relations, without intimacy ; that we can meet each other every day with the greatest pleasure, and the most complete indifference. Paris is for the affections a vague climate ; neither hot nor cold, good nor bad. It is at least a moderated green-house, with the aroma of oranges ; but where nothing flourishes, and nothing dies.

LETTER IV.

When a palm of the desert falls, blasted by lightning, all the tribe pour forth their lamentations ; each one weeps his beloved, and gives the tribute of a tear to his memory : they are united in sorrow, but the source differs in each. One says he was the pride of the mountain ; another, his shadow protected us ; a third, he sheltered the water at its source ; a fourth, he was a guide to the lost traveller. Thus each one expresses his own peculiar value of the lost treasure ; whilst the little children, without comprehending the extent of the loss, or the properties and virtues of the tree, search in vain along the sandy plain for the savory dates, that they know how to prize. Thus, while the political parties which divide France, in the death of Charles X. deplore their vanished hopes, and calculate the results of this event, we, the children of elegance and harmony, whom quarrels, fatigue, and politics put to sleep ; we, without pretensions, weep for ourselves the king of old France, chivalrous France, brilliant and poetical France, — the lady of quality ; France, in fine, which is no more.

As children, who care not if the fallen palm was useful for its height and shade, we regret its fruit, and we seek in vain in citizen France for the flower of courtesy, the perfume of royalty, — that benignant majesty which fell in the monarchical tree, and which we shall see no more.

“Good actions,” say some, “replace beautiful manners, and they are worth more.” The citizen-king is more suitable to our manners than the gentleman-king. The vessel of the state is no more a superb ship, with sails attached, that the capricious winds impel hither and thither in their fanciful sway, and cause her to perform in her circuitous course many beautiful evolutions : it is now a steam-ship, loaded with coal and potatoes, going at a certain hour, arriving at the day fixed, and landing at the place assigned.

For ourselves, we love the ornaments and pleasures of life ; we love the beautiful ships and the old monarch of past times, because of all our associations, and because that no one could speak a more gracious word, or make a more noble present ; and he was also eminently royal, and that was of consequence in his position ; in fine, there was tradition attached to his line, as was said at the theatre, and that tradition is lost with him.

Now that Charles X. is dead, there will be justice awarded to him; it will be understood that his faults, so severely punished, were only noble qualities; but, unhappily, these qualities were not the fashion of our age, and that was his crime; for it is a sad truth, but it must be confessed, there is a fashion in virtues as in dresses, which would cause one to believe that our virtues were only ornaments. It is virtue out of date that injures a brave man: yesterday, firmness was a kingly virtue; to-day it is called an arbitrary tendency. Good and evil are not divined by instinct, as formerly; but they form the study of life, and good souls deceive themselves as to the path of duty, — so it is said. At the age of Charles X. it was too late to follow new courses, and go upon new ideas. We were not to him an enlightened people, who claimed their rights: we were revolted subjects, whose insolence must be repressed. What would you have required of him? He had not lost the illusion of “faithful subjects;” he comprehended nothing of the *legal insurrections* of the chambers; he still possessed crowned prejudices; in a word, he reigned under pretext that he was a king. That was why he died, as he lived, in exile. Oh! this is sad — always to see kings

proscribed, guillotined, assassinated, from the misunderstanding of the people! Formerly, a man who offended his prince was sent to the Bastile; now it is the prince who offends his people; and the people, who are absolute, proscribe him. The land of exile is, then, the Bastile for kings.

LETTER V.

The last ascension of M. Green, and the grand ball of the Austrian ambassador, are the events of the week that have the most occupied the Parisian world. These two pleasures have been attended by more than one wonder: the morning witnessed the sailing of a balloon through ether, and the evening shone resplendent with one of the most beautiful fêtes of the year.

It has been said that one of the aëronauts, whilst ascending, recognized the beautiful Duchess de S*** among the spectators, and engaged her to waltz with him at the ball that evening. He said to her, "The first waltz, madame, do not forget it." This man was a splendid dancer, and ranked high in the fashion-

able saloons. And the same evening, he was at the ball, waltzing with an air so placid that we never should have divined he had taken such a trip to reach Bondy.

When the air-ship struck against a wall, the cry of the crowd was superb ; it was a beautiful, unanimous terror ; those who had not seen the danger were equally terrified as those who had, so much does alarm spread ; but our fears were soon dispelled, for we saw M. Green moving his drapery, and he then disappeared.

This last ascension of eight aëronauts recalls the first of this sort which took place in 1784, and put in commotion the whole city of Lyons. The ninth of January of that year, Joseph Montgolfier, the Prince de Ligne, the Count de Laurencin, the Marquis de Dampierre, and M. Lenoir, ascended from Brotteaux, left bank of the Rhone, in a *Montgolfière* inflated by smoke. The balloon, which was netted with small twine, was lined and covered with paper, and for twenty days was submitted to many experiments, in which the whole population of Lyons was interested. The balloon at length ascended in presence of more than two hundred thousand persons assembled from thirty leagues around ; for an aëronautic expedition was then an event.

A strange incident hazarded the lives of the aëronauts. A young man of nineteen, named Fontaine, a near connection of the Montgolfier family, had entreated for the honor of joining in the expedition, but was mercilessly refused. In his desperation he made use of stratagem, bold and reckless, but admirable, as it succeeded: he perched himself upon the highest point of the enclosure, and when the balloon passed near him, he leaped into the parachute with a prodigious leap, and alighted in the midst of the aërial band, who were much astonished at this new method of overtaking the balloon. The shock to the balloon, from this hasty *entrée*, broke some of her meshes. During the ascent, the rent increased; and those who manned the air-ship were upon the point of falling into the Rhone, whose course they followed. Our little aërial vessel trembled through fear of becoming aquatic, and the agitated spectators looked on with alarm; at that moment, without an order, without a word spoken, the Rhone was covered with boats, and every boatman stood ready to aid those who were in imminent danger of drowning. During this time, Joseph Montgolfier and the young Fontaine, in the midst of the consternation of their companions, gathered

the straw to increase the flame in their balloon, that they might maintain its equilibrium with the mass of air. Arrived at the confluence of the Rhone and the Saone, a gust of wind drove them to the Genissieux swamps and fens, where they fell. M. Laurencin's arm was broken; M. de Montgolfier lost three teeth; the others were battered and bruised more or less. Brought back in triumph to Lyons, they all presented themselves in the evening at the theatre, in the governor's box; they were welcomed with enthusiasm, which amounted to frenzy. The brother of M. de Montgolfier, who was seated in the pit, was discovered, and the spectators lifted him in triumph in their arms to the governor's box, where they forced him to join the heroes of the day. But this did not prevent the ill-natured sport of the people of the Lowlands, who made more than one song upon this adventure, that the *boatmen* still sing. This song turned into ridicule the bold party for heaven, that could leap no higher than the frogs in the Genissieux swamp.

Now that we have finished with balloons, we will speak of the fête in honor of the Austrian embassy. We were dazzled with diamonds. Diamonds and a profusion of hair have again

become fashionable. As for diamonds, a lady may wear as many, nay, more than she owns; and for hair, they wear not only all their own, but also that of others. During the ball, nothing was spoken of but the diamonds of the Duchess de S***. "Have you seen them?" said one, "she has at least two millions worth upon her head, and people crowd around her to view the magnificent diadem; but her beautiful eyes and her charming countenance fascinate all beholders, and gradually withdraw attention from the ornaments which encircle her brow."

Paris skips, dances, and entertains herself in every way, and that in haste; for Ash Wednesday is at the door. This creates a panic; and, considering that Lent is so near, we brighten, like the last moments of an expiring lamp. But the ladies have not danced this last winter: they foolishly deprive themselves of much success and pleasure. Dancing has lost its illusion, and the present wearisome performance of the art makes it a *painful duty*. A very pretty young lady said to us the other day, "My mother told me, that, at my age, nothing amused her more than dancing; but, as for me, I confess it does not amuse me at all." "You know nothing of it," we answered her; "you have never danced."

"How — but yesterday" — "Oh! you call that dancing; to walk three steps forward with the feet turned in, the back crooked, and the shoulders rounded; then shuffle to the right, again to the left, without lifting your feet from the floor during the solemn scene; after this you may hazard crossing sides, but with the same, always the same slow step, or you would be taken for a woman of forty years." At a ball, the age is known by the feet more than by the face: a woman who dances with the feet turned out, acknowledges to thirty; she who wheels round in the figure avows herself forty; whoever is nimble of foot, and dances with zeal, confesses to fifty; and she who hazards the *zephyr* motion betrays herself sixty, if she is capable of performing it. You walk in measure; you do not dance, and you cannot know if you love dancing. Formerly, the dance was an exercise; for that was required to accomplish the steps; now exertion is scorned: dancing was also a pleasure, because it gave hopes of success. A young girl who could dance had a future. Matches were made at balls: a *solo* well performed was worth a dowry. Now to attend to dancing would be ridiculous; and the dancing-

masters are reduced to becoming professors of history and geography.

The celebrated M. Levi comprehends the age : his dancing-school languished, and he established a school for improvisation : he has exchanged the *bow of the dancing-master* for the chair of eloquence. He has taught some little girls to speak some hours, without stopping, upon the rise of the sun, filial love, or the death of some great man. If they have not the spirit, they acquire the mechanism, of the art ; if they have not genius, they have boldness, and can do without it ; and the papas and mammas come home from exhibition very proud that they have a daughter who can improvise : that is truly wonderful !

But, after all this amount of instruction, we notice one thing : formerly, the women could not spell, but they could dance, and they attracted much attention ; now that they speak English and Italian, and can improvise in French, — that they read British reviews, the histories of M. Mignet, and even the speeches of the Chambre, — that they can support conversation with the men, — the men leave them alone in their glory. Oh, women ! women ! they comprehend not their vocation : they know not

that their first duty, their first interest, is to be attractive. The men do not seek them to share their cares, but to dispel them: knowledge for women is a luxury, the necessity is grace, elegance, and the power of pleasing; women are the ornaments of life, and the law for all ornaments is to be light and airy.

LETTER VI.

Friday, we celebrated the birth-day of the Queen of England. It was a beautiful fête, and our hearts were filled with admiration of her gracious majesty, of this young person who wields the sceptre with so much power; who shines forth as an example of dignity to crowned heads. As in England it is a woman who is queen, uniform was not worn by the men, but by the women only; and nothing could be more pleasing than the white dresses adorned with flowers, which made young again the mothers of families. This was the fête of the rose, and never had this queenly flower shone in more loveliness.

There had been ordered for the fête, besides

the splendid garden and greenhouse flowers, from a thousand to twelve hundred rose-bushes. A part of the garden was covered with an awning, which was arranged like a saloon for conversation. But what a saloon! Bordered with flowers, which intertwined gracefully, and formed festoons ascending to the top of the awning, with here and there a large flower-stand filled with magnificent flowers, which were surrounded by the admiring crowd; the alleys, covered with light cloth, evinced great regard for the white satin slippers which tripped lightly along; simple iron benches were exchanged for damask couches; whilst a table with books and albums invited to this pleasing retreat, this immense boudoir. Here, as by magic, the odors of the flowers, the echoes of the music, were wafted along; and one might have dreamed he was in elysium, and saw the happy shades glide along the festooned pathways, some dancing gayly, and some (here the illusion ceases) more gravely supping. This was the fête of the rose, and certainly this royal flower had never shone more brilliantly.

There were tiers of rose-bushes, with other flowers ascending from invisible steps: the effect was charming. Here and there, one surprised

the lovely young dancers gathering some roses to replace the light garlands around their dresses, which the whirl in the waltz had scattered and torn. And they might pluck them with impunity; for there were enough to crown with roses a hundred and sixty thousand English families, with their eighteen young girls, Isabella, Arabella, Rosina, Susanna, Louisa, Eliza, Mary, Lucy, Betsey, Nancy, &c.

There is no fête without a *lion*, and this evening it was a charming Anglo-Italiano princess, whose entrance created a great sensation. Lady Mary Talbot, married two months since to the Prince Doria, had arrived from Genoa two hours before the ball. Fatigued with her journey, thinking only of repose, who could have imagined she would in two hours prepare for the ball? As she is reposing, these sounds greet her ear: "Bring a ball-dress for madame the princess." Like a courser indolently stretched upon the grassy bank, who hears the echo of the war-trumpet, and darts towards the field of battle, thus did our princess fly to the toilet at this summons to pleasure. From whence came this robe so lovely and perfect? what beneficent fairy has ordered it from her genii? It was only a true friend who would

evinced this zeal; and by this test can a true friend be recognized. O beautiful woman! listen, and it will serve to guide you in your friendships: she who admires you may deceive, but she who wins the admiration of others for you is the real friend.

And in the evening we saw these two young friends, each proud of the beauty of the other, strolling through the gardens, followed by a cortège of those who were led by curiosity to see beauty and elegance, but remained ardent admirers. These two beautiful *lionesses*, surrounded by the admiring crowd, caused the *ex-lionesses* who were laid aside for that evening to become pale with envy. The magnificent diamonds of Madame the Princess Doria (diamonds of historical renown, among which was the *Doria*, large as a pavement-stone, and celebrated in the history of family diamonds) dimmed the lustre of more than one necklace and bandeau sported by the parvenues. The superb ornament which produced this great sensation was for us an ancient remembrance. We had admired it ten years before upon a brow as beautiful as that of the present wearer, but more severe. Then it was worn by a Princess Doria, mother-in-law to her who had newly arrived in

Paris; she was not fair, with the light and graceful figure of the English Lady Talbot, but of majestic form, rich olive-brown complexion, stately mien, and regular features; worthy of ancient Rome, from the nobleness of her carriage and the grandeur of her character, — worthy of holy Rome, from her charitable deeds and the ardor of her piety.

We recollect seeing her one evening, adorned with these wonderful diamonds, at a grand reception at the house of Count de C***, ambassador extraordinary from the King of the Low Countries to the Holy See. We saw her again in the halls of the Vatican, not in velvet robe and covered with diamonds, but in a woollen dress and coarse apron, washing the veritable feet of the pilgrims in a veritable tub. This is the custom at Rome: on Maunday Thursday, the great ladies humble themselves by washing the dusty feet of the poor girls who have made their pilgrimage to that city on foot. But, as it is only a great lady who has a right to humble herself thus, much vanity attaches itself to this work of abnegation. I cannot recall to mind, without smiling, a little circumstance illustrative of this observation. Two daughters of M. de C***, who were then children, but are now beautiful

and intelligent women, were very much elated, and very much inflated too, that, on account of their rank as daughters of the ambassador, they had attained the signal honor of attending the Princess Doria to the Vatican, and aiding in these labors of love.

LETTER VII.

For twenty years, we have heard saloons abused for their tediousness, puerility, &c. The railers seemed blind to the fact, that all our statesmen, all our men of genius, are men of saloons. Because Jean Jacques had been a lackey, it has been said that, to be eloquent, a person must be born in a low condition, or, if well born, must live with the vulgar; forgetting all the beautiful creations of genius that the elegant world has teemed with; and now, notwithstanding this experience, we hear unceasingly of the intellectual poverty of our saloons, of the incapacity of men of the world, of the futility of their ideas, and littleness of their views; and we hear all these phrases everywhere, even in a saloon, seated between Lamartine and Victor

Hugo, or between Berryer and Odilon Barrot, who are, in our opinion, as delightful in conversation in French saloons, as they are in poetry and oratory for the nation at large.

It has been said that there is not a man of talent or a woman of genius extant in society at this day, quite overlooking Byron, Prince Metternich, M. de Chateabriand, Madame de Stael, and George Sand, who are born and nurtured in society: yes, George Sand, notwithstanding her aversion to the people of the world, betrays in every page the tone of good society; no woman who had not lived in the world could paint it as she has done. Ask M. de Ramières, he will tell you that he has seen Indiana eight years since at a ball of the ambassador's from Spain, and that she was one of the most lovely women at the ball.

Each new friendship of George Sand elicits a new romance, and for our own part we rejoice. The history of her affections is entirely in the catalogue of her works. Formerly she met with a distinguished young man, elegant but cold, egoistic and polished, one of those icicles of society that never melt, ycleped a man of the world, and M. de Ramière saw the light; in our literature loomed a masterpiece, and the

name of Indiana resounded throughout all France, notwithstanding the cholera and political disturbances which advanced their rival claims for our attention. A little later, a young man in a less brilliant position, but of a good family and very accomplished, was introduced to George Sand: this man delighted her with his beautiful voice; and from his inspiring notes sprang *Valentine*. Again, upon her horizon loomed a poet; and suddenly George Sand imparted to us her revelation of *Stenio*. An advocate next gained her ear; and George Sand was upon the bench, and again poured forth her eloquent soul in *Fiamma*. At length, upon her perilous voyage, George Sand found a pilot: he was a pastor, and pious feelings again flourished in her soul, and George Sand became moral, even austere, more austere than virtue; for virtue consists in simply refusing what is evil. George Sand went farther: in her extreme scrupulousness she denied herself the good, and her last heroine, in compensation for all the others, obstinately refused a good and honorable marriage, which would have been for her happiness and all her family; but George Sand found it more generous to make her renounce it.

. One sees that there is a little confusion in this

revival of pure ideas ; the author loses her path for a moment, and the mists of the mountain arise and obscure it. Even the exaggeration of principle gives us good faith in its return. This holy metamorphosis being due to the *Words of a Believer*, the hero of this new romance of George Sand is a venerable person, as formerly that of *Valentine* was a singer, that of *Fiamma* an advocate, and the heroine of *Lelia* a poetess. You see, each of her admirable books carries the impress of the affection which inspired it ; and this same George Sand, who shows herself from time to time cold and disenchanted with the heroes of the saloon, — friendly, fresh, and smiling with the singer by the brooks, and is filled with the inspirations of the muse when in communion with the poet, republican with the advocate, — appears now moral and religious with the politic priest.

LETTER VIII.

The noisy revels that attend the last days of the carnival always bring sad associations to my mind. When we were children, masks were the

subject of so much dread and so many tears, that we have cherished against the fêtes of the carnival a rancor which the most beautiful fancy balls cannot overcome. We had the unhappiness to be a beautiful child. Ah! have pity upon the adored victims who are the pride of their relations. The fête days inflict upon them horrible torments, unknown to other children. Those who happen to be ugly may at least amuse themselves during the carnival: they are dressed as harlequins, scarecrows, or circus clowns, and then they run free; but those, alas! whose beauty condemns to admiration, those who are decked for the show, and too handsome to be masked, they enjoy no pleasure. The poor dears are shut up in the house during the two days which precede the carnival, and sent to bed earlier than common. If in playing they happen to fall, as is quite *usual* for children, they are not pitied, but scolded; the blow is not cared for, excepting from the scar which may follow; they are chided,—that is hard; they weep, and then they are reproved for weeping; for that will spoil the eyes. At length, the great moment arrives; they are dressed for the show, the household assemble to admire, the nurse is in ecstasy, the porter sheds tears of commiseration.

tion, which do him much credit, and utters some exclamations, such as, "He is a jewel! he is an angel! he is a love!" Ah, God! he is much better than all *that*: in truth, he is a martyr. The poor child goes up to his mother, who is viewing with delight her idol. "Mamma," says he, in a sad tone, stretching out his little arms. "Well, my child." "Take me up." They hasten to complete his little toilet, and all admire him anew; then the child goes up to his aunt. "How beautiful you are, my love!" "Aunt," said the child, whom vanity could not sustain, "aunt, here it pinches me;" and he showed his knee, which was in close quarters from his tight dress. "Walk, darling," said the good aunt: "in walking, the cloth will stretch." The child, seeing that an aunt is merciless, tries his grandmother; she was feeble, and he hoped from that. One may always rely upon the feeble. "Grandmother," said he, showing her his dress embroidered with gold and decked with other ornaments; "grandmamma, how it scratches me!" The grandmother is melted, and the bystanders separate them. To quiet the dear child, they bring his vanity to their aid, and tell him how handsome and charming he is; and, to stop all complaints, a cham-

bermaid whispers to him, " One must pay dearly for being so beautiful ; we must suffer to shine ; " an admirable maxim, which sustains in their torment all the martyrs to vanity.

Ah ! if beauty measured itself by suffering, we were beautiful, cruelly beautiful, that famous day when our friends were seized with the fancy of disguising us as Apollo ! Our long golden hair served as a pretext for this fancy, that the offended god has since made us cruelly expiate. How he has avenged himself of our insolence ! As soon as the offence was committed, we were punished. Poor, frail child ! how unworthy were we of our immortal splendors ! how light was the tunic ! the golden rays of the sun, how heavy ! And the unhappy lyre that we trailed along over all the chairs, what reproaches she drew from us ! how we murmured ! How cold we were ! We were always found upon our knees before the fire ; for we had not stolen the fire from heaven, and our own was feeble. Ah ! without doubt, we felt the truth that the learned have since discovered, truth till then unknown, that the sun has no heat. What severe colds we connect with Olympus !

Now, happily, that our friends are less poetical in their ideas of a carnival, they have ceased

to torment children: the dress of the little mariner, for instance, is very pleasing, and loose and easy. Children are at the same time charming and happy in this costume; and this has been the fashionable dress for some years.

In a great ball-carnival given last Wednesday, a quadrille of sylphs created the most lively sensation. This dance was performed by young and beautiful persons, who, said one, were not at all disguised. At all times they are graceful and charming, lovely and imaginative in their sports. That evening they sported their wings. Each sylph had for a partner a domestic animal or a wild beast. We hasten to say that these gentlemen were perfectly disguised. The *rudest* were asses, the most *affable* were bears; but we could not see through the mystification — they remain bears and asses to us.

We have in our circles some wise people who are possessed with a mania to know all that is to be known, and a little more. They attend all fêtes, belong to all societies, have a prescience of all things; this they call keeping the run of things. They make twenty visits in a day, and can tell you that Madame — received company upon such a day; they were not there, but they knew her habits; they knew of a din-

ner here, and a supper there; they were not present, but they can tell you the bill of fare; they know it better than you, who were one of the guests. At all the news you tell them, they reply, "I know it." They know all the espousals that are to take place; all the people that are ill, and likely to die. They place their glory in never being surprised. Their mortification would be to be found in arrears; they care not for love or fame; the highest ambition of a phenomenon of this description is to be, even to the end of life, a man *well informed*. He never questions — a question would destroy him. Even after a tour, he dares not risk this proof of ignorance; nothing is secret from him that has passed during his absence; he feigns to have kept the run of the world by his correspondence; he heard the news where he was; besides, the great events have awaited his presence. He questions not, but he listens with all the skill that so great a study demands; he listens to four separate conversations at once, as Cæsar dictated four letters at the same time. His ever-open ears, according to the expression of an English writer, are never closed by reflection.

LETTER IX.

We have made a tour to the provinces, where we have visited some of our Parisian acquaintances at their chateaus, and have made this discovery, that we know not the ladies of Paris until we have seen them in the country. Oh, how different ! how metamorphosed ! and how much the Parisians gain in general by this change ! A woman, so assuming, pedantic, or affected, — who would seem insupportable in Paris, — at her chateau appears to you all of a sudden, as mistress of the house, the most simple, affable, and agreeable of beings. It is in Paris that all the women play a part ; it is the craving to produce an effect that superinduces a second nature, and destroys the nobleness of the first. In Paris, vanity renders the ground sterile, in the country fertile. In Paris, a woman thinks only of shining ; her pride is egoism ; herself — always herself — is the first consideration ; her idea is to be the most beautiful, the most witty, the richest woman of the age ; in fact, the phoenix ; and her children, her husband, her sister, her mother, all her friends, are sacrificed to her mania for creating a sensation which is the moving-spring of every

thought and action. In the country, on the contrary, her vanity reposes, or rather it attaches itself to her friends; her pretensions, far from being hostile to you, are favorable; it is your welfare, your pleasure, which occupies her from morning till evening; she identifies herself with you: no more worldly preëccupation, she has only one part to play, — that of a good mistress of the house; and this she performs to a wonder.

Her vanity is to conduce to your happiness; that vanity which separates you from her in Paris unites you here; you owe to her your sweetest pleasures, and you discover in this woman a thousand good qualities of which you formerly had no idea; you find *her* intellectual, whom, till then, you had thought deficient; you discover that she is accomplished in music; that she sings well, — beautiful talents which family rivalry had modestly led her to conceal. “My cousin had such a beautiful voice,” said she, “that I never dared sing when she was present.” In fine, you discover that she has two adorable little children that you had never seen, and that she manages perfectly. This woman, so censorious, and so much addicted to ridicule in Paris, in her chateau feels kindly towards all the world. If you speak of an absent friend, she makes an

eulogium upon her, and even renders justice to her beauty; in Paris, she was envious of this woman, and could not pardon her beautiful hair, her conquests, and her diamonds; in the country, she loves her, forgets the diamonds, and all that, and writes to her a thousand affectionate things; and she is sincere.

O wonderful! What does this prove? That the air of Paris does not agree with Parisians. Vanity and envy compose the atmosphere here, which corrupts the most noble natures. Men yield less than women to this fatal influence. They believe themselves charming; that preserves them from being envious, or at least their envy operates in another manner: they quarrel with a friend when he attains success.

We found Paris very animated on our return: this brilliant season, that we call winter, offers unbounded pleasures.

LETTER X.*

There are some extinct maladies, such as *pituite vitrée*, and other descriptions of disease,

* This is by Madame Gay.

of which physicians deplore the loss with comical naïveté ; but the maladies of the spirit remain complete, and we are left to lament the loss of none of the infirmities with which nature or civilization have so lavishly endowed mortals. Compare the characters of Theophrastus, the full-length portraits of Plutarch, the faithful copies of Labruyère, the living pictures of Aristophanes, of Terence, of Molière, with the collections of our modern painters of manners. Our modern depictees of poor humanity lament this unalterable constancy in whims and vices, which produces a fatiguing monotony : having for resource only some changes in manners and customs, with slight shades of difference, they are reduced to rebaptize their copies. We shall then render a service to our modern Theophrastus, by pointing out to him new arrangements of old whims, which give to society a new aspect.

At this day we search in vain throughout our saloons for any specimens of those cavalier knights, who attach themselves to a pretty maiden, support her disdain, her caprices, fight for her, die for her. These originals have disappeared ; but, in lieu of them, politics and literature still have their fops and pedants : love has no more devotees.

It is not that love has passed away like the *pituite vitrée* of the ancients ; but it has taken possession of the female heart, and it is curious to see the effects of this transmigration upon all classes of society. The airs of indifference, positive denials of attachments, have passed to the men ; whilst boasted preferences, marked attentions, indiscreet steps, are the share of the women. Formerly the lady's love was betrayed by her scrupulous care not to pronounce the name of the loved one ; now the name is in every phrase, it is reiterated in the recital of last night's events, and is in all the projects formed for the next day ; it is the pivot upon which all their conversation turns.

The complaisance with which our young men yield themselves up to be adored, gives them a nonchalant grace unknown to their fathers. They know not despair ; they desire nothing keenly ; their imaginations are not upon the stretch to seek occasions to meet the fair one, to assure themselves as to the sentiment they inspire : no, the attention of our cavalier knights of the present day do not even amount to dancing with the lady-love at a ball to which she has dragged her reluctant swain in attendance upon

her. The true exquisite dances but little or not at all, and never excepting with the most distinguished of the company, as the mistress of the house, or the heiress in prospect, or the lady who is to give the next ball; for it is to be remarked, that these charming revilers of the pleasures of the world put forth their claims to be invited everywhere.

It is no more with the young cavaliers as formerly, when they followed the object that enthralled them to enjoy her success, to feel the heart beat with rapture in hearing every one say, "How beautiful she is!" No, truly; it is at the house where she does not visit that it is of consequence to him, above all, to be admitted. Then to see the poor lady striving so hard to obtain a note of invitation, that she may attain for herself the happiness of witnessing the flirtations of her ungrateful swain with another! How many visits, how many manœuvres and flatteries, does she make use of to reach this end! She even descends to reproaches. "It would be unsuitable," she says, "to invite her most intimate friends without her; it would be an insult to affect ignorance of the connection that subsists between them: however, this intimacy reduces itself to receiving a bouquet at remote

intervals, and she claims credit from others that they are an offering from him.

Nothing is more amusing than the fatuity of these women in displaying the superb bouquets of which they know the price, and which one of their messengers has been seen ordering from Madame Prevost. Nothing is more diverting than the feigned embarrassment, when a lady without forethought speaks of her regret at calling upon her one day when she was engaged; and nothing can exceed the little airs and affectations *à propos* to a billet-doux which is made visible, and then immediately concealed under the belt, but with an edge left above, to draw the attention of the curious. All these little manœuvres, composed and arranged to suit the present age, might furnish material for very good comedies; and they claim the pencil, so faithful, of our contemporary writers.

Agenor furnishes another specimen of the fatuities of the day. A character he could not be called, but one of a species. He possessed no ideas or tastes of his own; fashion alone imposed his thoughts, his actions, his fancies, and his antipathies. Seeing the return of the antique style, of the gothic, and the *rococo*, he hastened to obtain a heterogeneous mass of

objects, such as broken columns, decrepit chairs, Chinese porcelain glued together, dismounted clocks, cracked panes of stained glass from a broken window of a cathedral, odd ewers, smoked hangings, tapestry figures of great personages, whose noses and chins, eaten by worms, offered to the eye only monstrous figures; for the mania for the antique does not imply the taste, and taste alone can select and arrange. Thus this imitation in Agenor only encumbered his apartment with a heap of uncouth lumber, which was ugly, uncouth, and useless.

Guided better by the exact imitation of the leaders of fashion, Agenor dressed with that assumed simplicity, which veils, under dark colors and a black cravat, the luxurious fineness of the linen; a watch of Breguet suspended from a chain of platina, was the only ornament which he wore; for he would not be so gaudy as to deck himself out with buttons and rubies, emeralds, opals, &c. so much sought after by actors, hair-dressers, and pedlars.

Only one thing excited his envy. He frequently encountered in the woods of Boulogne the young Duke de M***. He wore a large black cravat, the ends of which were crossed and secured by an antique cameo of remark-

able beauty ; and this negligé style of applying an object of art of a great price appeared to our hero the supreme of good taste. He ran round to all the curiosity shops, to the artists and antiquaries skilled in jewels, in order to procure a cameo like the Duke de M***. He saw many very beautiful, whose antiquity was doubtful ; and all those whose perfection tempted him to believe in their Grecian origin were beyond the limits of his expenditure. A lady, who was enamored by his charms, (for who has not some charms ?) heard of his frequent visits to the jewelers and dealers in curiosities, and discovered his wishes. She knew of a beautiful cameo ; it was the last treasure of the widow of a general who had fought in Italy. The payment of debts, contracted during her husband's illness, alone induced his widow to part with the beautiful head of Alexander the Great, the conquest of Bonaparte, and his gift to her husband ; and she sold it for the sum that would acquit her of debt.

Upon awakening in the morning of the first of January, what was Agenor's surprise and transport when his eyes lighted upon this beautiful cameo ! Not because he knew it to be the gift of his beloved, but because he could now copy the duke ; he was a mere copyist, — the original and

ambitious idea of vieing with the duke did not disturb his brain. As to gratitude, I am afraid there was none to speak of; though his lady-love was his first interest after his horses, his habits, his arms, the coffee-house in Paris, the green-room at the theatre, and the jockey-club.

LETTER XI.

The literary news of the week is the appearance of a new work, called *A Tear of the Devil*, by Théophile Gautier. This book of great originality would fain be a satire upon the pantheistic school; but the author, carried away by the poetry of his subject, is touching in spite of himself, when he wishes to ridicule only; and this involuntary pathos, this struggle of a critical spirit and an ardent imagination, forms in reality a great charm. *A Tear of the Devil!* and why, then, does the devil weep? Because he has done a good action: that is enough. Poor Satan!

For a long time we have heard our grand saloons described as fit for a royal reception, and we feel impelled to make this a subject for grave reflections upon the inconceivable increase, this

three or four years past, in the luxury of our apartments; it is a folly, a madness, beyond our powers to describe. The smallest sofa costs a hundred louis, the least lustre is worth from twelve to fifteen thousand francs. The ornaments of a window would be a dowry for a daughter, the furniture of a saloon would educate a son, the gewgaws of the boudoir would ransom a king. The drapery before the chimney is of velvet fringed with gold; the walls are concealed with a wonderful cloth of rich damask striped and embroidered with gold, which is of so thick and firm a texture that it stands up of itself; and, if the walls were to give way, it would support them. The curtains are of fabulous beauty, and would suit an enchanted palace: they are double, triple, and to be found everywhere. A door is concealed behind a curtain; also a closet; a library the same; there are sometimes eight or nine curtains in one saloon, and, as they are not all alike, one might believe himself invited to an exhibition of tapestries. The furniture is all gilded, the walls are also gilded: they say that one of the hotels in Paris counts no less than seven gilded saloons, all ornamented and furnished alike. Custom so orders it. In the reception-rooms there reigns a

sumptuous uniformity. In the saloons for conversation, as a person in the province said, the artistic air is, on the contrary, in the best taste. There nothing seems to correspond: it is the reign of caprice, fancy, and sometimes the heart also; for the saloon is an asylum of remembrances. We see furniture of all sorts and all ages; the whole room is a souvenir. There is harmony in the idea of this arrangement. That box is the legacy of an aunt; the work-table is a present from an old friend, and was brought from Spain; two of the tables came from Constantinople and Algiers; a fourth was won at a lottery for charity. In this little frame, ornamented with red velvet, is a picture that had belonged to M. de M***; that other charming design is from Madame D***. "Whose frightful portrait is this?" "It is the mistress of the house." "Who painted it?" "A friend who was also a rival." "The beautiful flower-stand?" "M. de B*** gave it. Those superb decanters came from Madame X***. And that magnificent tapestry? I purchased it from a poor woman, who was dying from hunger." Then, above all these charming useless ornaments, rises proudly a little crown of laurels; this is the treasure of the sanctuary, — a prize won by a dear child; this is the happy talis-

man that charms away bitter thoughts. This child's crown, thrown in the midst of these chimney ornaments, Chinese baubles, and fancy articles of all descriptions, seems to ask pardon for so many futile objects; this elegant life is not all lavished upon vanities: it is given to the world but for a moment; then it is devoted to dearer cares, to holy love.

But, how strange! as the dwellings increase in splendor, the manners become coarser and habits more vulgar; the coffee-houses, the theatres, and the saloons, are dazzling with crystals, paintings, and gilded walls; and the guests in these superb apartments seem as porters and hackney coachmen. They keep their hats on, and what hats! They swear, without anger, in saying good morning; they bawl out the most common remarks, they gulp down bad wine, they smoke ostentatiously wretched tobacco, walk proudly with ugly ladies, in short they make a bustle about every thing. The splendor which surrounds them sets forth in full relief the homeliness, we might say clownishness, of their manners.

What displeases us in all this luxury is, that it is not luxury; it has become a necessity; each person lives for himself alone, is

occupied only with himself, speaks only of himself. Certainly none more than we are partisans for *comfort*; none more than we admire a house in keeping, that *recherché* in all the details, the heartfelt hospitality which makes you feel that all is yours, every thing appears chosen for you, each object seems selected for your peculiar gratification, to seduce you to remain long with them. We make great account of this perfection of civilization; but we would not live for it alone; we would not chain our thoughts to the ornaments of life, and make them a burden; we would not show that perpetual anxiety that our position should be recognized, our exertions and taste appreciated. We may very well borrow from the English their *comfort*; but we ought at the same time to attain their manner of appreciating it; that is to say, the simplicity, or rather noble indifference, which makes the pomp and luxury of life an every-day affair. There is no need that this, which is merely an interest of the *ménage*, should become a subject of grave conversation.

To-day, as we took tea, we entertained ourselves all the time from the tea-pot, the fountain of conversation as well as Chinese beverage, and more or less with the beauty of the tea-service.

At dinner, we were engrossed with the plate and the porcelain; the crystals have also their importance in the discussion; the whole establishment, the footmen, the horses, the powdered coachmen, furnished conversation for the rest of the evening. With newly married people, we can comprehend this childishness; all is beautiful in a young establishment, all speaks of the future; each item of the ménage is a pledge of union. This joy in luxury is not pride; it is the first pleasure of proprietors, it is the interior life and *the* family, sometimes identical with love, as associated with all their pleasures. "Bride, you may love the plate, and the beautiful linen damask which belongs to you in common with the young man whom you yesterday called Monsieur, and who called you with respect Mademoiselle!" How all the familiar objects of the ménage become poetical when viewed as silent witnesses of your happiness, and mementos of your love! Oh! we will permit young people to talk of their ménage; for it is to recount to us their happiness. As to the rest, the display of elegance we meet with only in the saloons of ladies in the inferior fashionable circles. You do not find it at the house of the Duchess de N***, neither at the ambassador's

from England, nor at Madame de Roth's, above all, whose poetical abode has the air of a palace belonging to a rich artist, but not that of the hotel of a millionaire. You will infallibly find luxury restless, suspiciously elegant, *comfortable*, *insupportable*, in all the saloons in which the heads have not had time to accustom themselves to the honors.

LETTER XII.

Lent is very brilliant this year; it rivals the carnival in pleasures, I hardly venture to say it; but I must, since so it is. People dance, and dance with zeal, as they ought to pray; and certainly they do not fast. If you could see our exquisites at supper, if you could see them eat, you would not believe these the days of self-denial and fasting; neither could you comprehend how these nymphs should be so meagre. To see these fragile beauties at work, — to see the hams, the pastry, the ragouts of all species of animals which they devour, you would demand of them arms more round, and shoulders more thriving. Poor souls! on returning home, they must have undergone long fasting to neu-

tralize the effect of such repasts! A man of wit said, "The women do not know how much they injure themselves by eating;" and truly he was right; nothing breaks the spell of a woman's beauty more than seeing her eat. A good appetite is only permitted them on a journey. Above all things, they must be genteel; and a genteel lady should at a ball only partake of ices, fruits, and flummery.

LETTER XIII.

There are some people who look upon all that adorns life with disdain, who imagine that to contemn is to rule, and who believe they show their superiority by despising the pleasures of the people. To all that you recount to them, their reply is, "How! do you go there? What! do you amuse yourself with that?" In hearing them, we should say that life had some pleasures set apart for them, joys of the *élite*, sweet visions, odoriferous perfumes, which were impervious to our grosser senses. We feel humbled in hearkening to them; we envy their pleasures, upon faith of their scorn for ours; we dare not avow our

simplicity and plainness, our gross citizen-tastes ; we feel agitated like a country clown before a dweller in cities ; we hesitate at being amused at a fête that drives them to such a distance ; we doubt the truth of our impressions in seeing their disgust. But, when we gain the courage to analyze this great disdain, — when we recover sufficient presence of mind to search into the matter, to examine the claims of these exclusives to their superb ennui, we discover that theirs is a very miserable existence, that they amuse themselves in the most inane manner, that they laugh at the coarsest jokes, that they spend their time in vain and frivolous gossip, and consort with mediocrity ; then we recover our independence, and make bold to declare that we are not behind civilization, and utterly unrefined because we are not tormented and disgusted with the pleasures of the people.

The prejudice has been long established in the region of fashion, that nothing is more wearisome than a popular fête. We have long shared this prejudice ; but to-day we will attack it boldly. We are partisans for the popular fêtes, — the general delights. We would rather see a hundred thousand persons amuse themselves in Paris than see forty yawn in a saloon ; but

we would stipulate that the amusements should cost them nothing.

All the morning the little children have been rejoicing and frisking before our windows: "It is good, mamma, — oh! it is good; we shall go this afternoon to the Champs Elysées, and we shall see the shops;" and a whole future of shows and gingerbread was opened to them.

All the little girls are very happy to-day; for they have their new dresses. It is so easy to make a new dress for a little girl! any antiquated stuff will suffice for that; any rubbish in possession of the mother will make the child look and feel *quite smart*; and the joy of the poor little girl, who thinks she has a new dress, is an important part of the fête to us. As she surveys herself in the glass with pride, how she tosses her head, and holds herself straight! what importance she acquires in her own eyes! She will associate this memorable day with the new dress bestowed on her by her mother. A new dress is her joy, and her celebration of the festival. In addition to this dress, some one has given her an old silk handkerchief, — this is rapture; and an old pair of gloves, which is her pride. Gloves are a dignity for the children of the people; gloves are a symbol of luxury, — no work. Here,

then, is a happy thought for a day ; and is this nothing ? Must we disdain such pleasures ?

Alas ! our happiness is only a series of little joys and trifling pleasures ; each one enjoys according to his taste and character. A look, a word, a smile, for those who love ; a hat in a becoming fashion for one, a bouquet of violets for another ; for some a good dinner, for others a good rhyme ; a sail in a boat, fresh news, an amusing book, a sweet romance, a fire in winter, ice in summer ; passable wine for the poor, an English horse for the rich, — such are the ingredients, the details, that compose happiness. Happiness is like mosaic work, composed of a thousand little stones, which separately and by themselves are of little worth ; but, united with art, form a beautiful whole. Frame this mosaic with care, and you will have a pretty picture : enjoy wisely the passing pleasures which chance throws in your way, — which suit your temperament, and you will pass your life agreeably. Why always cast your eye to the horizon, when there are so many beautiful roses which surround your dwelling ?

Leave, then, the people to their amusement, without disturbing yourself ; mar not their pleasures by your coldness and disdain. We will

admit no pretext for staying away, not even that of ennui; we engage to witness this evening the popular joy. We will attend the monster concert at the Tuileries; we will view the illuminations at the Bourbon Palace; we will see the Arc de Triomphe illuminated, and the grand avenue of the Champs Elysées so beautiful with her illuminated garlands. We know beforehand that we shall be so foolish as to find the *coup d'œil* superb, and that we shall pass an hour in looking at all the reflected lights in the Seine; we shall amuse ourselves with the pleasure of others, and felicitate ourselves inwardly upon being neither dandy, nor woman of fashion; ambulatory merchant nor grisette parvenue; upon having no rank to guard, imposing it on us as due to our dignity to disdain the pleasures of the people.

LETTER XIV.

A friend writes to us from the country that the nightingale sings already: punctual to the month of May, she has commenced her serenades. Poor Philomela! what exactitude! What can

have attracted her here? Certes not the leaves or flowers. Songster of poetry and love, art thou, then, the slave of a date? Hast thou consulted the Almanac of 1837 to know if the hour for choosing thy mate has arrived? It is not spring. The azure of the heavens, the verdure of the meadows, the freshness of the waters, the revival of the flowers, have not inspired thy song — it is the calendar. Thou hast said, “The fifteenth of May, at twenty-five minutes past eight in the evening, I will select my mate, and sing my love.” O Philomela! thou art no more a true child of the spring.

We all went last Sunday to the French theatre. Mademoiselle Mars appeared in two plays. She is always young, always elegant and graceful; her gestures are noble, and her voice is music. She performed Marie in Madame Ancelot’s celebrated play; a part which always draws a large audience from the fashionable world. The female part of the audience shed tears abundantly; for *they* can appreciate a noble sacrifice, above all *those* who are incapable of making one: certainly *they* are possessed of the greatest sensibility.

How ugly Paris seems after a year’s absence! Oh! how sad is a city of pleasure! When one

returns from a journey, after long respiring the pure and embalmed air of the mountains, how stifling are the streets of Paris! They are like narrow galleries, damp and dark, of a subterranean city, the atmosphere is so heavy and dark. Yes; we could breathe more freely in the grotto of Pausilypus. Ah! let us leave this cavern, and search for daylight. Give us air and space.

The garden of the Tuileries was magnificent last Sunday; beauty shone from its skies; the royal presence graced it; and the spring on that day deigned to be gracious. What a beautiful scene! at the same time pleasing and sublime. Here was to be seen what had never before greeted our eyes in Paris at the same time, — the heavens blue; the trees green; the people as they should be; the crowd joyous and picturesque in costume, inhaling the perfume of lilies and flowers! Was it ever so seen before? In Paris, when the sky is blue, the trees are grey, and the dust smothers us. At Paris, when the trees are green, it rains; the people are dirty, and covered with mud.

This is a day for fasting and prayer. These holy ceremonies are so beautiful; the abstinence and close mourning have so much power over the imagination, that the most indifferent are

awakened, and the fervor of piety is kindled in the feeblest souls. Ah! what more consoling, more sublime, than this reflection, that each privation ransoms a sin! Oh! how generous is this religion, which, for a sacrifice, grants us a hope! After the darkest night follows the brightest day; happiness springs from our tears; our privations form our conquests; to suffer is to merit.

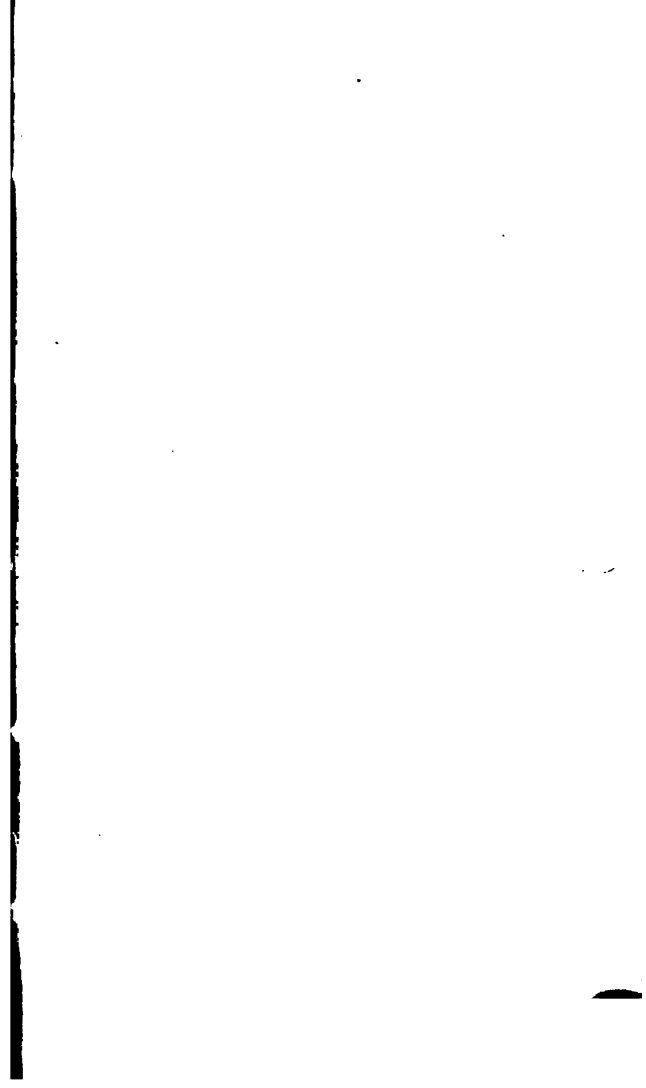
We will not imitate many journalists, and boast of the sermons of our priests, as if they were declaimers at the tribune. A holy man, who speaks to us in the name of his God, should not be criticized as a deputy who comes in the name of his constituents. It appears to me sacrilegious to speak of our holy and inspired guides and directors as orators and men of talent, and, whilst they are pouring out their fervent thoughts, to criticize them by the rules of grammar and rhetoric. If the national representation is respectable, the divine is sacred. We will not sully by our praise these divine teachers, who speak to us for our salvation, not for their own glory.

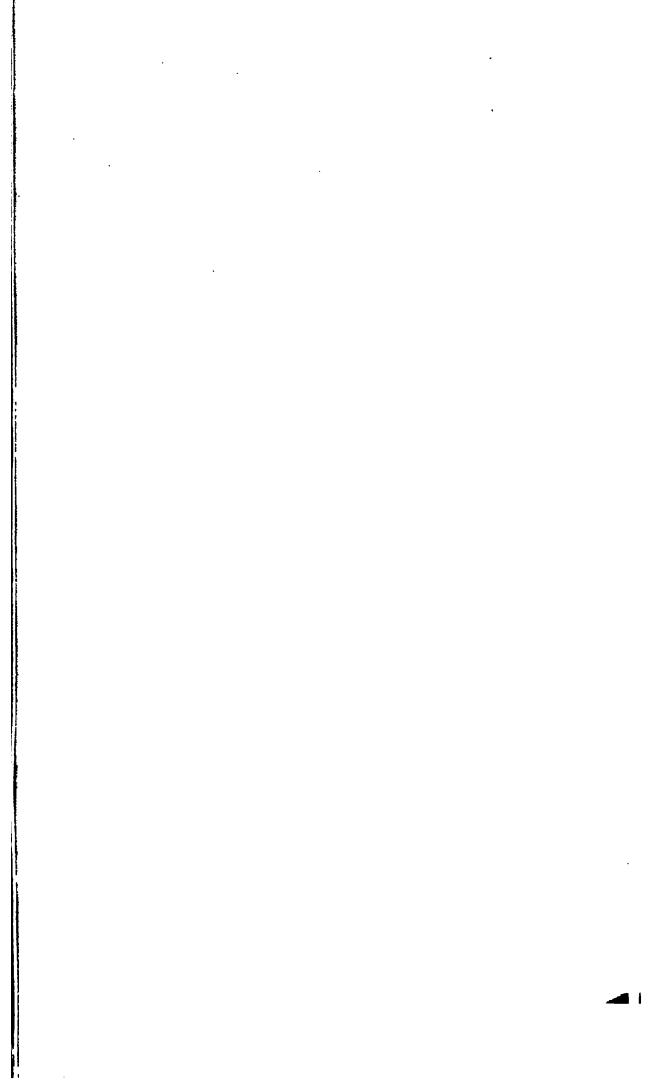
THE END.

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JAN 31 1956

